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THE DEFINITIVE ALL-AMERICAN COLLECTOR-CAR MAGAZINE

NOVEMBER 2015 #134



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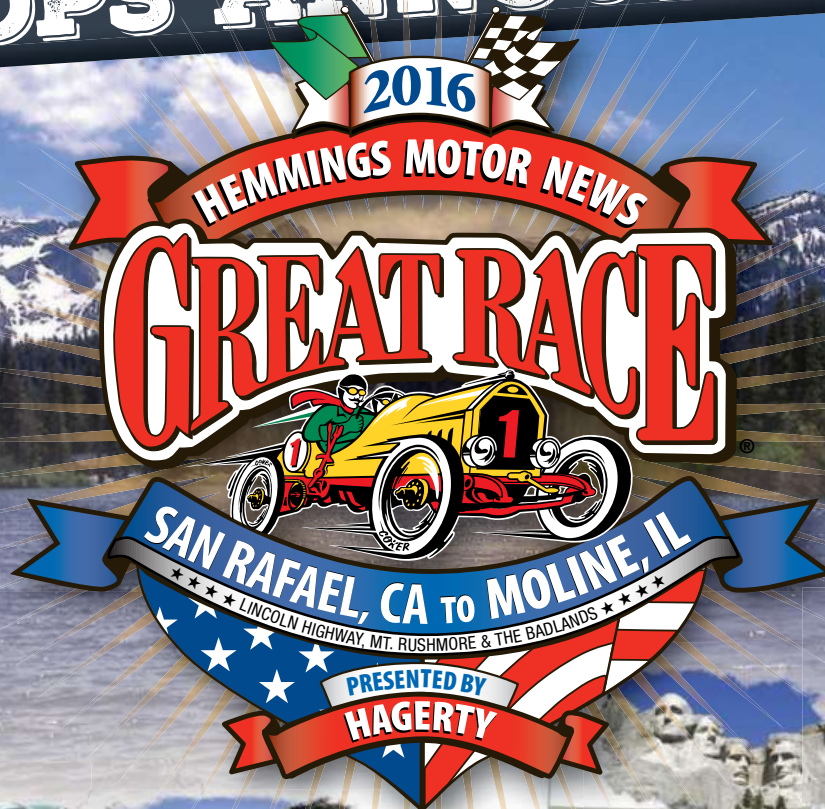
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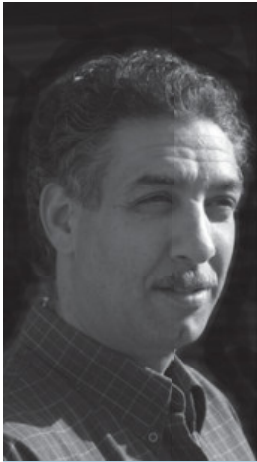
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Chevrolet Favorites

It's wonderful that we have such an extensive variety of truly great brands of automobile available to us in the world to satisfy our lust for old cars. Being a longtime fan of General Motors cars, of the five divisions, I have always placed Chevrolets at the bottom of my GM list. Not because of anything specific; it's just that I've usually found the designs of the other four brands more to my liking. However, there are several Chevrolet models that I have always wanted to own; these are the designs and styles that grab my attention the most.

When it comes to the third-generation full-size Chevrolets, of the entire four-year-long run, my preference has been for the 1962 models, followed by the '63s and '61s; the '64 cars are too plain for my taste. The '62 Chevy incorporates the best of the '61 style with that of the '63, and my favorite of these is the '62 Biscayne two-door sedan—with painted wheels and poverty caps, please. Being a huge fan of GM's bubbletop designs, my choice of these is the 1962 Bel Air over the '61 Impala, but having a matched set would be ideal. And, yes, I would take any of the above cars with six-cylinder power.

Going back to the immediate postwar era, I've always desired one of the 1947-'48 Aerosedans or '49 Fleetline sedans. With their long fastback rooflines, the body style is one of the most intriguing and captivating in the automotive world.

Although many Chevrolet enthusiasts are head over heels over the Tri-Fives of 1955-'56-'57, I tend to prefer the designs of the '54 Chevys as well as the earlier 1952-'53 models. While they may look a little too fuddy-duddy for some enthusiasts, there's something about the shape of their rounded rear quarter-panels that has always interested me. These are nice-looking cars, easy to work on, fun to drive and much cheaper to buy. Of the Tri-Fives, I've always liked the clean look of the '55 model the best, although, given the choice, I'd take a '56 Nomad over them all.

Then there are the 1958 models—some of my all-time favorite American cars. It doesn't matter if it's the glamorous Bel Air or the bare-bones Del Ray, they all are fascinating looking cars, which I consider to be among the best designed American

body styles of not only the 1950s but of all time. In my opinion, a stripped down two- or four-door Del Ray sedan with no options would make a wonderful ride that I would be proud to own.

Back in the Sixties, our neighbor used to sometimes drive us to school in her 1965 Impala Super Sport—silver blue with blue interior. With their sloping roofline and individual round

taillamps, these cars are exciting looking and just loaded with style. Then, in the early Seventies, my older brother and I shared a 1966 Impala sedan,

although I didn't care much for it. Truth be told, I've always been partial to the boxy 1977-'85 full-size Chevrolets; there's just something about their square shape that I find attractive, and perfect for a "vintage" daily driver.

Another sensational daily driver would be an early Monte Carlo, 1970-'72. They are, without question, one of the best postwar American car designs ever created. As for the ever-popular Chevelle, I've always been attracted to the colonnade-styled cars, such as the 1973-'75 Laguna, S-3 or Malibu Classic. With their disc brakes and fine handling characteristics, they too would make ideal daily drivers.

But of all the different Chevrolet model lines, my favorite has always been the Corvair. No question that the Corvair is one of the most fascinating and uniquely engineered automobiles ever created. I've always considered it to be a poor-man's Porsche 911, but in reality the Corvair is way more than that. Be it the charming 1960-'64 models or the sporty 1965-'69 cars, each has their own characteristic flair about them.

Regarding the prewar cars, I've always been fond of the grille on the 1940 models, and with its thin front bumper, it has made a convertible coupe model another must-own car. The 1941-'42 models are nice, too, but I prefer the minimalism of the 1940 style, and the 1938 Master Deluxe sport coupe. And the '32 Chevy, regardless of body style, makes a great alternative to the far more expensive '32 Ford. 🐾



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THIS YEAR'S HILTON HEAD MOTORING FESTIVAL AND CONCOURS D'ELEGANCE will take place October 31-November 1 at the Port Royal Golf Club in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina. The honored marque will be the Chrysler Corporation including Dodge, Plymouth and De Soto. The festivities will also focus on some big milestones, celebrating 75 years of Continental as well as 60 years of Thunderbird. Clubs are encouraged to take part in the Car Club Jamboree on the 31st, and submissions are still being accepted for Sunday's Concours. Our very own Richard Lentinello will be a guest judge. Please visit www.hhiconcours.com for more information about this year's event.

AACA Central Fall Meet

THIS YEAR'S MEET WILL HAVE A LITTLE Cajun flavor as the AACA wraps up its calendar in Houma, Louisiana. Tours and activities will include visiting some plantations, gator farms and all the Cajun cuisine and music that make up the bayou.

Of course, there will be great cars and the show will feature a flea market, car corral and several judged classes. The event is set to take place November 5-7 at the Houma-Terrebonne Civic Center. For registration and information, visit www.aaca-centralfallmeet15.org.



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5-7 • AACA Central Fall Meet
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5-8 • Zephyrhills Autorama
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12-15 • Fall Florida Auto Fest
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AMCs in Vegas

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On Friday there will be a special tour to Boulder City, followed by a free barbecue for all

show participants and guests. Saturday will feature the car show and swap meet, followed by an awards presentation and dinner. The show is open to all AMCs, Ramblers, Nashes, Hudsons, Metropolitans and Jeeps up to 1987. For more information, visit the club website at www.snamc.amcrc.com.



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Stylistically, it’s easy to see why this car is a museum piece. At the time of its debut it looked to have come from the future. With its dramatic oval face and sleek body, as feline and predatory as the Jaguar name promised, it arrived into a world of tailfins like a jet fighter among prop planes.

Mechanically, it’s museum-worthy as well. The in-line 6-cylinder engine on which Jaguar’s postwar fortunes were built, had its origins in World War II. According to one of the many legends surrounding the car’s creation, it was born while its engineers were on the lookout for German bombers. From these late night, secretive brainstorming sessions emerged the twin-cam XK engine, whose output, durability and smoothness became legendary.



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school during recess one day, Alan Ford has wondered about this photo.

Who's at the wheel? What's he driving? At what event was the photo taken?

"The picture was taken by photographers Howe & Arthur of Chicago whose name appears in the lower left corner," Alan wrote. "Their name comes up when I Google it, but it has still led me nowhere."

It's certainly at a race, judging from the similarly belted-hood racer in the background, and likely one of the many horsetrack competitions held around the country during the first couple decades of the century. Beyond that, we're just as stumped as Alan.

Big Ol' Whatzit

ABSOLUTELY NOTHING ON

this big bulbous pickup that we came across on the Steampunk Vehicles blog looks familiar.

We thought perhaps we could start with the hood profile, but no, that led us nowhere. Just

about everything looks to be handbuilt, hammered from sheetmetal in simplistic forms.

Probably the only thing that could help us identify this vehicle is the extremely long wheelbase. Unless the

happy owner stretched the frame, we'd hazard a guess he rebodied a limousine or a hearse.

We'd sure like to credit the guy who built it for taking on such a job. Can anybody help us out with that?



Oddball Olds

ALONG WITH THE DREAM CARS, GENERAL MOTORS put together several production-based cars with non-production trim and colors for its annual Motoramas during the Fifties. Could this 1956 Oldsmobile 98 be one of those latter cars?

Frequent L&F contributor Craig Whatley of San Rafael, California, sent in these photos of an enhanced Ninety-Eight with enough supporting information to lead one to believe it could be a Motorama car. The trim around the headlamps, on the front fenders, and around the taillamps all jazz up the car and look like nothing used on any other Oldsmobile.

On the other hand, we looked over the photos we could find of production cars at the 1955 and 1956 Motoramas and saw no cars quite like this one. And as Craig noted, the owners of the car have yet to obtain iron-clad documentation that the car was specially built as such by GM.

Until then, it's at least guaranteed to make some people scratch their heads.



Recently discovered a unique or noteworthy classic car? Let us know. Photographs, commentary, questions and answers should be submitted to Lost & Found, c/o Hemmings Classic Car, P.O. Box 196, Bennington, Vermont 05201 or emailed to dstrohl@hemmings.com. For more Lost & Found, visit <http://blog.hemmings.com/index.php/category/lost-and-found/>.

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Auctions America is excited to announce the newest addition to its 2015 schedule of events, a collector car auction on Hilton Head Island in South Carolina as part of the Hilton Head Island Motoring Festival & Concours d'Elegance. The sale, featuring approximately 100 investment-grade vehicles, will be held on Saturday, Oct. 31, at the Motoring Festival's host hotel, The Westin Hilton Head Island Resort & Spa.

From American classics to European sports cars, the Hilton Head Island Auction will span the spectrum of the market, shining a spotlight on a broad variety of automotive styling and engineering. Limited consignment opportunities are available. For further information, please contact an Auctions America specialist today.

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*Hilton Head Island
Motoring Festival
& Concours d'Elegance*



Motor City Musings

RM SOTHEBY'S JULY AUCTION TOOK PLACE IN PLYMOUTH, MICHIGAN, AND SAW A 79 percent sell-through rate, with over \$7.4 million generated. American Classics topped the sales with a 1935 Duesenberg Model SJ Dual-Cowl Phaeton hammering home at \$852,500. The next highest sellers were a 1933 Packard Twelve Individual Custom Sport Phaeton and 1934 Auburn Twelve Salon Speedster, topping out at \$583,000 and \$506,000, respectively. In addition to these concours-quality Classics, there were several affordable and solid deals to be had as the selections covered most marques of old Detroit ranging from 1922 to 1961, with sales as low as \$20,900 for a 1948 Plymouth Special Deluxe Convertible. For a full list of results, visit www.rmsothebys.com.

Dallas Dealings

LEAKE AUCTION COMPANY PUTS ON A show in Dallas twice a year, and this year's fall event will take place from November 20-22. Last year's auction saw 556 vehicles cross the block, for a sell-through rate of 68 percent. Expect to see over 500 cars and trucks again this year at the Dallas Market Hall. Doors will open daily at 9 a.m., and there is still time to have your car consigned for the event. For an up-to-date list of cars as well as details on fees, pricing and other information, please visit www.leakecar.com.



AUCTION PROFILE

WOODIE WAGONS WILL ALWAYS STAND out at a car show. By 1941, woodies (once just a minuscule segment of the marketplace) had so grown in popularity that Ford allocated 2.6 percent of passenger car production to station wagons before the U.S. entered WWII. It's been estimated that Packard produced a little more than 350 wagons for the 1941 model year for both the 110 and 120 in both the standard and deluxe styles, making this 110 wagon a rare find indeed.

The wood on this Packard station wagon, both inside and out, is original and was revarnished to preserve its patina. It's believed the car had only been driven 67,500 miles and was refurbished as recently as 25 years ago. The same owner had this woodie since 1986, and it was exhibited in 1999 at the Packard Centennial in Warren, Ohio.



CAR 1941 Packard 110 station wagon
AUCTIONEER Mecum Auctions
LOCATION Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
DATE August 1, 2015
LOT NUMBER S173

CONDITION 3+
RESERVE Unknown
AVERAGE SELLING PRICE \$100,000
SELLING PRICE \$120,000

NOVEMBER

Calendar

Oct. 30-Nov. 1 • CCP Auctions
Mississauga, Ontario • 416-923-7500
www.ccpauctions.com

5-7 • GAA Classic Cars
Greensboro, North Carolina
855-862-2257
www.gaaclassiccars.com

6-7 • Smith's Auction Company
Paducah, Kentucky • 800-200-6030
www.smithsauctioncompany.com

12-14 • Mecum
Anaheim, California • 262-275-5050
www.mecum.com

13-14 • Carlisle Events
Lakeland, Florida • 717-960-6400
www.carlisleauctions.com


20-22 • Leake
Dallas, Texas • 800-722-9942
www.leakecar.com


27-28 • Dan Kruse Classics
Houston, Texas • 866-495-8111
www.kruseclassics.com



Fall Florida Autofest

FORMERLY THE ZEPHYRHILLS FESTIVAL, the Fall Florida Autofest will be held in Lakeland, Florida, and will feature a two-day auction run by Carlisle Events. The auction will take place at the Sun 'n Fun Complex on November 13-14 and is expected to have over 400 cars available for bidding. Carlisle's auctions are known for not charging registration fees if your car doesn't sell, so this is a perfect opportunity to put your car on the market. For more auction information as well as consignments and forms, please visit Carlisle's web page at www.carlisleevents.com.

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Texaco Neon

OF THE MANY HISTORIC OIL BRANDS THAT HAVE become icons of petroliana, the circa-1901 firm of Texaco is one of the most recognizable and popular. Garage Art is now offering a commercial-quality reproduction of a colorful old neon Texaco Gasoline sign (item GAD-Neo-5TXOIL). It's 24 inches in diameter, features hand-blown neon tubing over a full-color silkscreened base, and comes ready to hang indoors—just plug it in and enjoy the vintage glow. Cost: \$349.95, with free shipping.

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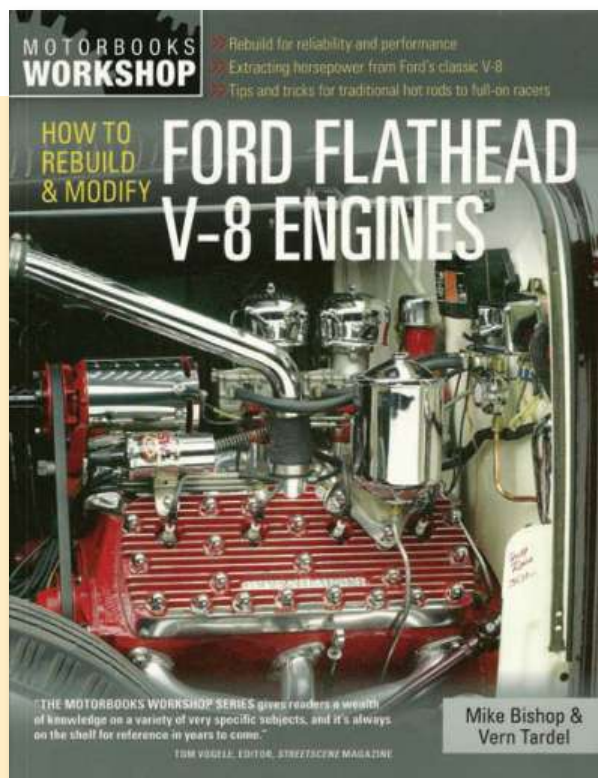
1968 Dodge Charger

THE UNMISTAKABLY MUSCULAR LOOK OF DODGE'S epic second-generation Charger has led this car to often be cast as the ride of big-screen baddies, but that wasn't the case with the blue 1968 model belonging to the good guy character Dennis Guilder in Stephen King's 1983 film, *Christine*. Auto World has replicated Guilder's Charger in 1:18-scale (item AWSS111) for its Silver Screen Machines line, and they've done an incredible job. The car is accurate to the film, down to its black vinyl top and raised white-letter tires on Cragar S/S mags.

It's a fantastically detailed model, with opening panels, factory-style chassis overspray and even a driveshaft that spins with the rear wheels. Charger lovers and movie buffs alike will thrill to this collectible. Cost: \$99.99.

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How to Rebuild & Modify Ford Flathead V-8 Engines

ALL OWNERS OF EARLY FORD V-8S, OR ANY CAR POWERED BY A FORD FLAT- head, will want to read this insightful book on how to extract maximum performance and reliability from a vintage flathead engine. It was written by two of the foremost flathead experts, Mike Bishop and Vern Tardel. In it, you'll discover how to properly rebuild a Ford flathead, as well as how to modify with both vintage and modern performance parts, inspect and port the block, and proper run-in and tuning techniques. This softcover book totals 208 pages, and all the photos are in color and well composed. It's an excellent value. Cost: \$34.99.

—Richard Lentiniello

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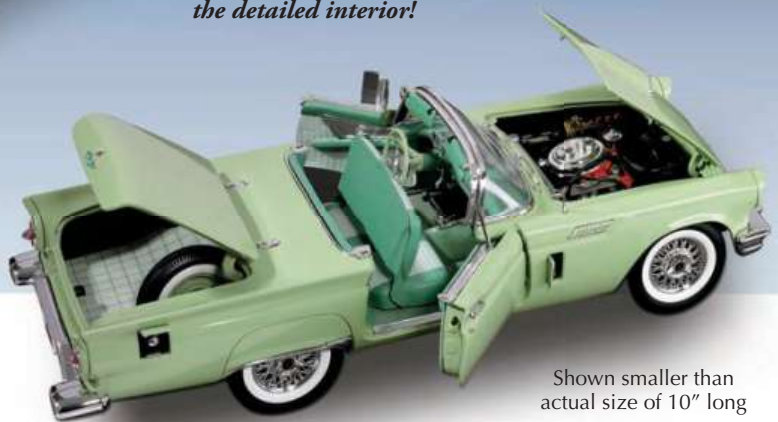


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ALL IT TAKES IS A FRACTION OF A SECOND WITH AN ERRANT BELT buckle or oil-slicked wrench to badly damage your car's fender paint; you can prevent a costly mishap and add convenience while working on your Ford, with this new and durable fender cover. It's made of 1/8-inch-thick PVC cushioning that grips the metal like a soft magnet, and its "Ford V-8"-emblazoned outer skin features a non-slip mesh finish that keeps your tools handy. It's sized 22 x 34 inches, and is part number OYL-FG2135. Cost: \$24.97.

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1951 Henney-Packard Ambulance

WHILE IT MAY BE DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THE PRESTIGIOUS PRODUCTS OF PACKARD doing duty as hard-working professional vehicles, many did through the years. One of the last Packards to answer the call was the 1951 model that the venerable Henney Motor Company built into an ambulance. This hefty white-metal example, representing a gray-painted U.S. Navy Medical Department ambulance, is Brooklin's latest issue in this British firm's Community Service Vehicles Professional Cars series. With its limited brightwork, sober blackwall tires and a stretcher-equipped red interior, it looks ready to save the day. Cost: \$159.95.

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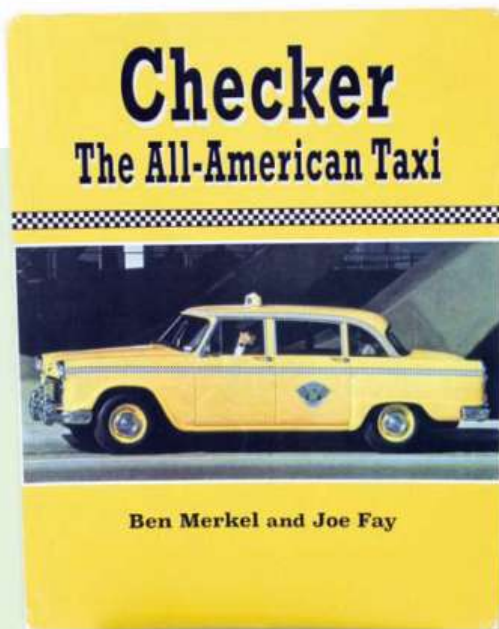


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STUDEBAKER'S 1963 AVANTI WAS TRULY A HALLMARK CAR FOR ITS DESIGN, PERFORMANCE and enduring appeal. The first-year model, with its characteristic round headlamps, has been immortalized by noted automotive artist Jim Gerdon, in his new art print. This limited-edition print—1,000 copies have been made—is a replica of Jim's hand-drawn artwork, and each 12 x 24-inch-sized example has been personally signed and numbered. Cost: \$40, with free U.S. shipping.

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Checker, The All-American Taxi

WE'VE ENCOUNTERED BOOKS ON AMERICAN independents before, and books on taxicabs, and books on Checker. But never like this one. This is the first history of Checker to be published outside the United States, just released by Earlswood Press in the U.K. The authors, however, are Americans, Ben Merkel and Joe Fay, the latter a former Checker club president. The 155 softcover pages are a mix of text and captions, but fear not: The narrative comprehensively covers the Checker story from a marque history to the unique airport limousine and ambu-cab specialty offerings that did so much to define the company. There's also a comprehensive buyer's guide for those interested in acquiring one of these urban legends.

Cost: \$29.95.

—Jim Donnelly

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Vintage watch auctions don't always make history or break records. Sometimes they can get downright dull. Most occasions I sit through a seemingly endless parade of secondhand luxury castoffs; perfectly fine timepieces that billionaires now find boring. But once in a while something catches my eye, something genuinely rare and exciting that stops me cold and reminds me that there are still vintage treasures to be found.

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From a 230-cu.in. straight-six to a dual-quad 409-cu.in. V-8, the 1963 Impala SS provided something for everyone via an extensive options list



BY THOMAS A. DeMAURO • PHOTOGRAPHY PROVIDED BY GM MEDIA ARCHIVES OR AS CREDITED

Simply saying that business was booming for Chevrolet by the close of 1962 would be an understatement. The automaker was number one in U.S. vehicle sales, and its parent—General Motors—had claimed over 50 percent of the market. The next closest competitor was Ford at approximately 27 percent, and a distant third was Chrysler at about 10 percent. The Beach Boys even released a song about Chevrolet's famed high-performance engine option entitled "409."

Business may have been too good, however, as General Motors was garnering unwanted attention regarding anti-trust laws. The U.S. Justice Department was poised to break up the corporation, should the automaker's market share continue to grow.

This put General Motors in the unenviable position of having to make sure it didn't sell too many cars. One move was to suspend all forms of auto racing, which happened with the anti-racing edict of early 1963. Of the five GM divisions, of course, sales leader Chevrolet and third-in-sales Pontiac would be affected the most because they developed extensive motor-sports programs.

Chevrolet's performers would now have to prove their mettle only on the street, since the "Win on Sunday, Sell on Monday" philosophy was no longer viable—at least in terms of corporate backing. Some independents were still waiving the Chevrolet banner on speedways and dragstrips on a smaller scale, but the marketing effect was diminished, since the division was not allowed to publicize it.

Buyer tastes were also becoming more refined. One size no longer fit all, and engine choices were widening and power ratings surging upward. This furthered the specialization of drivetrain and suspension components to ensure durability,



safety and the intended performance result, as will be illustrated in the drivetrain and suspension descriptions that follow. Vehicle personalization via the option list was also growing in popularity, and many new models were being sold with hundreds of dollars of extras that were quite profitable for both the automaker and its dealers.

Chevrolet's latest weapon in the sales wars was the "Jet-Smooth" riding 1963 Impala SS, featuring a handsomely redesigned body. Though the stylish convertible-like hardtop silhouette remained, straight A-pillars modernized the roof design. The forward-prow rectangular mesh anodized aluminum grille was expanded to full width with the familiar quad headlamps—now housed in individual bezels—set into it. Bright trim was added to the top and sides, and the bumper was revised with a kick-up in the middle. Parking lamps, though still in the same relative area under the headlamps, were reduced in size, reshaped and now featured amber lenses.

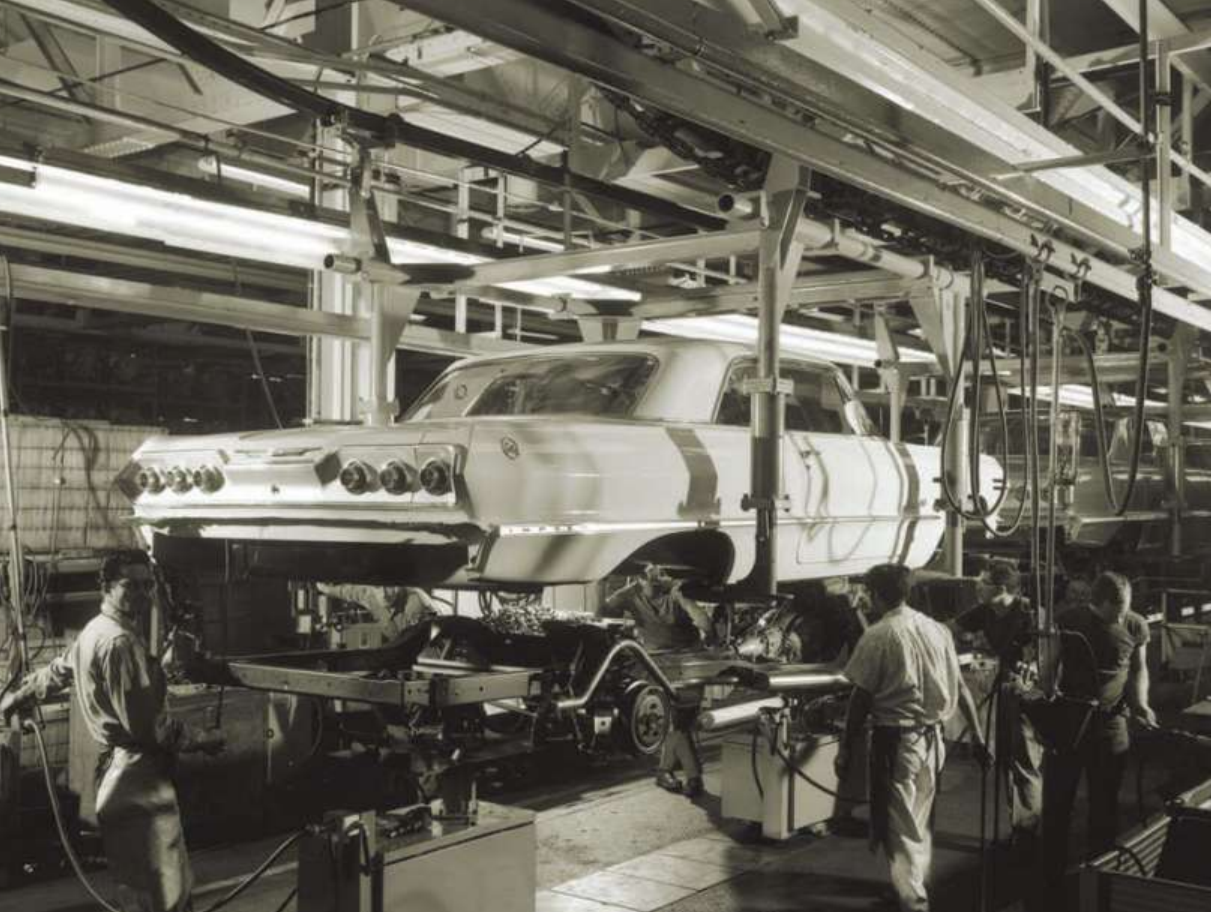
The body sides were resculpted, and gone were the 1962 character lines and trim that dramatically sloped downward from front to back, leading the eye across the wheelwell tops. Instead, the 1963's knife-edged creases were mostly level and parallel from nose to tail. A raised rib stretched from the top fender tip to the end of the rear quarter panel. A central line

advanced the full length of the body from the outer edge of the grille to the taillamp panel. A third ensued at front bumper level, but at the back of the front wheelwell and continued to widen toward the rear bumper, proceeding just over the rear wheelwell. Bright engine-turned (swirl pattern) aluminum trim accented it on SS-optioned cars.

Though the tail panel, which featured three round taillamps per side on the Impala (Bel Air and Biscayne had just two) was retained, its shape was completely different, departing from the batwing-esque 1962 appearance, and it was now concave instead of convex. Protrusions at the outer edges mimicked the shapes of the new bumper, and the SS option brought with it engine-turned aluminum panels in the rear cove. The new body was 210.4 inches long, and 79 inches wide—the same width, but just under an inch longer than the previous year.

Emblems on the front fenders denoted the engine. A "6" shield was for the six; a crest and "V" represented the 283; a crest, "V" and crossed flags, the 327; and a crest, "V," crossed flags and "409" numerals denoted the 409.

Impala was the top-of-the-line Chevrolet. As such it included as standard: bright metal side trim, electric clock, parking brake warning lamp, backup lamps and extended arm rests with fingertip-actuated door handles. There were 15 exterior



A 1963 Impala SS body will soon be mated to its 327/Powerglide-equipped chassis on the assembly line.

colors offered, and convertible top choices were white, black and beige. The 1700 series six-cylinder models cost \$2,667 for the two-door sport coupe and \$2,917 for the convertible. The 1800 series V-8s were \$2,774 and \$3,024, respectively.

The \$161.40 Z03 SS option for 1963—available on the Impala two-door sport coupe or convertible only—could be ordered with any engine including the six-cylinder. Z03 consisted of a special steering-wheel emblem; special wheel discs with simulated knock-offs; “SS” ornaments, emblems and moldings; all-vinyl bucket seats; a floor-shifter and console when the optional Powerglide or four-speed were ordered and HD coil springs. When the standard column-shifted three-speed manual

code P05 14x5 chrome wheels with standard hubcaps.

All engines used cast-alloy-iron blocks with a forged crankshaft and connecting rods. The 230-cu.in. straight-six was rated at 140hp at 4,400 RPM and 220-lb.ft. of torque at 1,600 RPM, and it employed thin-wall casting techniques to reduce weight and had seven main bearings to help maintain bottom-end rigidity.

The standard 3.875 x 3.00-inch bore and stroke, 283-cu. in., Rochester two-barrel equipped, regular-fuel engine was upgraded for 1963 with a revised hydraulic camshaft to improve breathing and a higher 9.25:1 compression ratio to boost efficiency. Cast pistons and 1.50:1 ratio rockers were retained, as was a 2.00-inch single exhaust system with a 1.875-inch

was retained and the SS option was specified, the console featured a block-off plate where the shifter would be.

Standard items that were new for 1963 included a 230-cu. in. inline six-cylinder engine; an updated 283 V-8; safety door latches; self-adjusting Safety Master brakes; extended-life exhaust system; air-washed rocker panels and a Delcotron Generator (alternator), which was first offered in 1962 as an option.

New options for 1963 were the L33 340hp, 409-cu.in. engine, which allowed the Powerglide to be paired with a 409 for the first time; vinyl top in white or black; Comfortilt wheel; AM/FM radio (in March) and the rarely seen



This SS convertible rests with its driver under a tree near a West Coast beach.



The 425hp, dual four-barrel 409 was the top Impala SS engine for the street.

tailpipe. The result was 195hp at 4,800 RPM and 285-lb.ft. of torque at 2,400 RPM.

Both 327 engines had a 4.00 x 3.25-inch bore and stroke. The 250hp at 4,400 RPM and 350-lb.ft. of torque at 2,800 RPM L30 327 featured the same cam as the 283, but differed with a 10.5:1 compression ratio, a Rochester 4GC or Carter WCFB four-barrel carburetor on an iron intake manifold and 2.00-inch diameter dual-exhaust system with 1.875-inch diameter tailpipes.

The L74 327 earned its 300hp rating at 5,000 RPM and 360-lb.ft. of torque at 3,200 RPM through additional airflow improvements. This was accomplished with a higher capacity Carter AFB, larger-port intake manifold, 1.94/1.50-inch valves and a 2.50-inch dual exhaust with 2.00-inch tailpipes.

All 409s were dressed with chrome on the rocker covers, air cleaner assembly, oil dipstick, filler cap and fuel lines. The bore x stroke was 4.3125 x 3.50 inches.

Built as a low-revving, torquey street engine, the L33 409 was rated at 340hp at 5,000 RPM and 420-lb.ft. of torque at 3,200 RPM. It possessed cast-aluminum pistons, 10:1 compression, a mild hydraulic-lifter cam with 1.75:1-ratio rockers, 2.065/1.72 valves, cast-iron intake, a single Rochester four-barrel carb, short-runner exhaust manifolds and dual exhaust with 2.50-inch headpipes and 2.00-inch tailpipes.

The 400hp at 5,800 RPM and 425-lb.ft. of torque at 3,600 RPM L31 409 engine sported aluminum impact-extruded pistons, 11:1 compression, a high-performance solid-lifter cam, large-port heads with 2.19/1.72-inch valves with chrome-flashed stems and heavy-duty valvesprings, an aluminum intake with larger Carter AFB carb, long-runner exhaust manifolds and heavy-duty bearings.

Dual Carter AFBs on an aluminum intake pushed the L80 409 engine's power rating to 425hp at 6,000 RPM. Though the 425-lb.ft. of torque rating remained the same, it was realized at a higher 4,200 RPM. The rare 409-based 427 Z11 engine and the different design MK-II 427 Mystery engine were for drag racing and NASCAR, respectively, and not paired with the SS option. Verne Frantz of the National Impala Association further explains, "The MK-II was never offered as an RPO or installed at an assembly plant."

The 400hp and 425hp 409s were only available with manual transmissions, and the clutch for all 409s used a cen-

trifugally-assisted diaphragm, whereas the clutch for other V-8s was of the diaphragm spring type. A 10.14-inch pressure plate was employed with the 230 and the 283 engines, but the other V-8s had a 10.48-inch clutch. An iron case three-speed manual transmission was standard with all engines.

Verne says, "An aluminum case Borg-Warner T-10 close-ratio four-speed was optional with the 400hp and 425hp engines until April when it was replaced by the Muncie M-21 close-ratio four-speed. An M-20 wide-ratio four-speed was available with both 327 engines and the 340hp 409 and also with the 400hp and 425hp 409s when coupled with a 3.08 rear-end ratio. The Powerglide two-speed automatic was optional with all engines other than the solid-lifter 409s."

The first-gear ratio for the Powerglide mated to the 230 and the 283 engines was 1.82:1, but the gear used for the 327 and 409 engines was 1.76:1. The later unit also had an additional drive and driven plate added to the high-clutch and the reverse-clutch packs.

A two-piece driveshaft with a center support bearing connected the transmission to the 8.375-inch Hotchkiss-type rear end, which could be had with optional Positraction. Available gear ratios included: 3.08, 3.36, 3.55, 3.70, 4.11 and 4.56:1. These ratios were matched to powertrain and option choices.

Riding on a 119-inch wheelbase, welded-steel, box-section X-frame, the front suspension consisted of unequal-length upper

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SUPER SPORT
SS
CHEVROLET

Super Sport features and other extra-cost options were presented here.



This chassis was built for show and features a cutaway small-block V-8, Powerglide transmission, rear end and muffler and small I.D. signs.

and lower control arms, heavy-duty coil springs, shocks and a .6875-inch anti-roll bar. The solid rear axle was located by a pair of lower control arms, a single upper arm and a .750-inch lateral control bar (aka "panhard bar") that ran from the axle housing to the frame and pivoted at its attaching points. Heavy-duty coil springs and shocks smoothed out road imperfections.

The overall steering ratio was 28:1, which provided a very slow 5.80 turns to lock. Optional power steering was still relatively slow at 24:1 and 5.06 turns to lock.



As this GM rendering reveals, the Impala SS's interior, like other Chevrolet full-size models was completely revised for 1963.

Braking was accomplished with 11 x 2.75-inch front and 11 x 2.00-inch rear drums and power assist to ease pedal pressure and metallic linings to increase fade resistance were optional.

The standard wheel size was 14x5 with 7.00x14 tires for the sport coupe and 7.50x14 for the convertible. Impalas fitted with the 409 used 8.00x14 tires. Tire cord composition was rayon or nylon with a blackwall or whitewall. Wider optional 14x6 wheels were also available.

Revisions for 1963 carried into the cabin as well. Instruments and warning lamps were directly in front of the driver and deeply recessed in a new hooded panel, and engine-turned inserts were added to each side and on the lower level with the SS option. Upholstery colors offered in the Impala were fawn, aqua, red, blue, green, saddle and black. Wide aluminum trim wrapped up the bucket seats' sides and over the tops.

The optional tach was now better assimilated into the interior: mounted right in the center of the dash. It was included when a four-speed was ordered in conjunction with the 300hp, 340hp, 400hp or 425hp engines. Air conditioning (not available with the 400hp and 425hp engines) was offered in two types: Deluxe fully factory integrated or C64 Custom hung under the dash at the factory or by the dealer.

Both *Motor Trend* and *Car Life* tested the new 340-horse 409 engine, but *Motor Trend's* test pitted a 409-equipped SS against a 250-horsepower 327 SS, both backed by the two-speed Powerglide automatic. Praised was the usable torque of the 409 as compared to the 327.

Despite the fact that understeer should have increased with nearly 100 additional pounds added over the front wheels with the W-block 409 over the small-block 327, the 409's suspension with heavier-duty springs was still given high marks while the



For 1963, the optional tachometer was integrated into the dashboard.

lower spring rates in the 327 test car resulted in more wallowing and less control in the curves, according to the testers.

To be fair, the only weight-adding and performance-sapping options fitted to this particular 409 test car were power steering, power brakes and radio. Conversely, the 327-equipped SS was a boulevardier that was optioned like it was built for a Chevrolet executive. Along with everything the 409 had, the 327 SS was further festooned with the additional 110-pounds of air conditioning and 19-pounds of power windows. The test also lists power seat in two separate entries, but this option was not supposed to be available with the SS.

The net result was that while the 327 would excel in creature comforts, it cost over \$350 more than its larger-engine sibling at \$4,119.65 versus \$3,763.45 and was heavier at 3,829 pounds at the curb versus 3,789 pounds. The 250hp 327 had a standard 3.08 rear gear when paired with the Powerglide, but the 409s (and the 300hp 327s) came standard with a 3.36 rear gear.

Not surprisingly, with driver, passenger and test equipment, the 0-60 time was better for the 409 at 7.7 seconds, and the 327 posted 10.4 seconds. Despite the additional weight, the 327 still sipped fuel at a lower volume, according to the testers.

On June 10, 1963, at the Tarrytown, New York, plant, the 50,000,000th Chevrolet was built. By model year end, over 2.3 million 1963 Chevrolets (not including trucks) had been produced—a new sales record despite the internal efforts to slow growth. Ironically, it was fortuitous for GM that Ford and Chrysler were flourishing that year as well. With GM's market share held in check, the antitrust watchdogs went off to fight other battles, and the world's largest automaker, at the time, remained whole. Chevrolet would go on to break sales records in 1964 and 1965 as well.

Coincidentally, the Impala SS's third-best sales season arrived in its third year, with 153,271 cars produced in 1963, considerably more than 1962's 99,311 and 1961's 453 (or 456, depending upon the source). In 1964, the Impala SS became its own model, and like the increasing fortunes of Chevrolet and GM, sales rose with 185,325 produced. For 1965, the Impala SS reached its zenith with 243,114 built.

In the face of increasing muscle car and pony car popularity, Impala SS sales dropped sharply in 1966, with just 119,314 cars sold. The slide continued to the mid-70,000s in



With its mild hydraulic cam, the new 340hp version of the 409 was a smooth and torquey street engine with 420-lb.ft. at 3,200 RPM.

1967, mid-30,000s for 1968 when the SS returned to option status and bottomed out at 2,455 for 1969, as it was only available as an SS427 in its final year.

Chevrolet's full-size sporty model that opened the "We" decade was gone by the close of it, not to return until the 1994 to 1996 run. However, there were over 900,000 examples from the economical six-cylinder to raging 409s, 396s and 427s, with plenty of 283s, 307s and 327s in between. Chevrolet's SS moniker has become a legend, and the 1963 Impala SS did its part in forging that legacy. 🏆

SPECIAL THANKS to Mike Berry and Verne Frantz of the National Impala Association for providing additional information.



The 7-position Comfortilt steering wheel option was new for 1963.

Matchless SS

Rare doesn't always equate to valuable, as this 1963 Impala SS convertible with a straight-six engine proves



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY
BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

Yes, you read that headline correctly. This Impala SS convertible is powered by a straight-six engine—Chevrolet's tried-and-true 230 Turbo-Thrift overhead-valve six-cylinder. For far too long, enthusiasts have thought that an SS-equipped Impala meant that it was a high-performance model, but it wasn't. The SS package was simply a sporty decorative option and bucket seats, and not much more. More significantly, back in 1963 a buyer could order the SS's RPO Z03 package on any body style, be it a hardtop, convertible or sedan, with either the V-8 or straight-six. This black SS convertible is proof.



While most enthusiasts hold the 409-powered Impalas in high esteem, the opposite is true about those Impalas with two fewer cylinders. Because most of the six-cylinder-powered cars—having either been sent to the crusher or converted into V-8s by hot rodders, those base-level sixes that were once commonplace—are now the truly rare Impalas. Unfortunately, rarity doesn't always equate to desirable, or valuable. Thankfully, there are some enthusiasts who know rare cars when they see them, and take the time, effort and expense to restore them as authentically as possible, regardless of the powertrain.

Two such individuals who appreciate and truly understand this six-cylinder Impala's historical significance are Joe Davis of Melbourne, Florida, the car's owner, and his brother John, the one who found the old Chevrolet in the first place.

That was back in 1986, when Joe told his younger brother that he really liked early '60s-era Chevrolets with the six taillamps. Joe says: "I was also particularly fond of convertibles and so, thinking that I needed a project, John, who lived in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, at the time, started searching for one, and found this car in Harrisburg. He convinced me that I needed to come up from my home in Maryland and look at it, and I ended up buying it for \$1,600.

"The car was located in a dilapidated garage off an alley and appeared to be a totally original version of the particular make and model that had been used as a daily driver and simply retired to the garage," Joe remembers. "It was in rough condition, with evidence of rusted-out floors and body mounts. The interior condition was also rough with evidence of water intrusion. The engine barely ran, and the transmission barely



Restored better than when it was first built, everything about this Impala SS is striking—the sporty steering wheel, shifter console, and aluminum trim below the instrument panel. The special badge on the front fender denotes it's a six-cylinder model.



shifted when coaxed. It had an aftermarket under-dash air conditioning system that had been installed at some point in its life; the system was not functional."

Like many enthusiasts who first buy a project car, this Impala was not at all special to Joe. Yet, over time, he developed a strong bond with it. "I have always liked convertibles and have owned several over the years, so perhaps the fact that it is a convertible first made me look seriously at buying it," Joe says. "At various times in the rebuild sequence, I considered modifying the car and choosing a more desirable powertrain, but I always came back to the conclusion that it was born a six-cylinder, it should remain a six-cylinder, and that it should be kept as near 'stock' as possible."

That engine was the base six-cylinder that displaces 230 cubic inches from its oversquare 3.87 x 3.25-inch bore and stroke dimensions and has a 8.5:1 compression ratio. At 4,400

RPM, it develops a very useable 140 horsepower, and with its seven main bearings and hydraulic lifters, it runs smooth as silk. The carburetor is a single-barrel Rochester. Attached to the bellhousing is the car's original two-speed Powerglide automatic transmission; equipped with the SS option, the shifter is located in a special floor-mounted console between the bucket seats.

As the restoration work progressed on the old Impala, Joe and John started to see the car in a different light. "More and more, I began to see the car as something special," Joe tells us. "One thing that helped in this regard was that, as we continued our work on the car, we kept seeing anecdotal information pointing out just how rare this particular body and powertrain combination was, and this made me want to keep it as original as possible."

Joe goes on to tell us that "Chevrolet production numbers in 1963 didn't provide a lot of detail. We have read that GM claims there was a fire that destroyed them. If you take a look at surviving production numbers, you very quickly conclude that, in terms of the numbers, 409 cars were much more

rare than six-cylinder cars. The difference is that, as these cars became collectible, the 409 cars were very desirable and the six-cylinder cars were not. So the question becomes, is this the most valuable surviving



The eye-catching red-on-black color combination is perfect for the Impala's shape, as it enhances the car's muscular form. Folded top is covered by a matching red tonneau cover that snaps on. Note the twin antennas in the rear.



Rear-mounted radio speaker lies in the center of the rear seat back and features a gold-on-black Impala badge; decorative buttons add some flash to the door panels, while the bucket seats provide plenty of comfort and welcomed thigh support.



1963 Impala Super Sport convertible? Most people would say, 'no.' Is it the rarest surviving 1963 Impala Super Sport convertible? We don't know, but we think it might be. We don't believe that many SS convertibles with a six-cylinder and Powerglide transmission have survived."

After about 22 long years, the restoration of this striking Impala SS was finally completed in 2012, yet no one in the old-car hobby or vintage Chevrolet circles knew of its existence because the car has never been displayed at a show. Rather than sitting all day in a parking lot beside his car, Joe and his wife, Jolene, would rather be driving it, and they do to the tune of several hundred miles every year. And when they aren't cruising around in this handsome Impala, they're driving their stylish 1956 Ford Crown Victoria instead.

On the road, Joe says that he really enjoys driving the Impala. "The car gets so many thumbs up, honks and whistles that it just makes it a joy a drive. However, after not driving the car for a while, I find that I need to become accustomed again to the turning radius and road feel. It is equipped with power steering that provides very little in the way of road feel. It also requires quite a bit of 'turn' of the steering wheel to get the car turned. The addition of radial tires in place of the original bias belted tires greatly improves the car's overall handling."

Upon the conclusion of my photo shoot of the Impala, Joe suggests we go for a ride, with me at the wheel. Although I have never driven an early '60s Impala before, being a close cousin to Pontiac, I drove nearly identical to my 1964 Le Mans that I used to drive daily from Brooklyn to New Jersey back in the early '90s. Same steering, same brakes, same cornering characteristics, and same performance, as my Pontiac was also powered by a 140hp straight-six engine and two-speed Super Turbine automatic. And same interior smell, too!

“It performs
as you would
expect an early
'60s Powerglide
to perform.”

The bucket seats are somewhat soft, allowing you to sink into them just the right amount, although there's no side support of any kind. The steering wheel falls readily at hand with the horizontal speedometer in clear line of sight at all times. And the view out the wide windshield provides lots of visibility, which makes driving a breeze. Yet, just like my old Pontiac, the steering ratio is quite high, which isn't as reassuring to steer, especially when compared to today's quick rack-and-pinion systems; this is especially so when driving in traffic. But you do get used to it, and realize that you need to plan ahead more and avoid driving in a hurried manner.

As to those four-wheel drum brakes, as long as you don't repeatedly abuse them, they perform just fine, slowing the car straight and smooth with



Uninformed enthusiasts are always taken aback when they see the 230 Turbo-Thrift 140hp straight-six under the hood. With so few six-cylinder-powered SS models remaining, it's a credit to the owner for keeping the car as-built.

owner's view



Whoever approaches the car is immediately struck by the fact that there is a six-cylinder under the hood. But, because this car was born a six-cylinder, it shall remain a six-cylinder; our goal was always to restore it to as original as possible. I really enjoy driving it, and the addition of radial tires improved the handling greatly. There is absolutely nothing about this Impala SS that I particularly dislike. It's a great car, and I'm particularly fond of those rear taillamps. —Joe Davis (seated, rear)

a comforting feeling that, yes, you will stop in time. Joe says that “When the car has sat for a while, the brakes may require some use to begin to operate properly; however, after a few miles and some hard braking, they straighten out and work well. The braking system performs adequately.”

Most amazing is that Turbo-Thrift six engine; it really does provide sufficient power, be it from a standstill or at speed, and really isn't that noticeably less powerful than the base 283-cu.in. V-8. Considering today's crowded roads and the car's somewhat lifeless steering and braking characteristics, this Impala's overall performance and usability is perfectly adequate, and it's ideal for the kind of drivers who aren't in a rush and who enjoy smelling the flowers as they drive by. You don't need to drive fast to enjoy the old-car experience, as confirmed by this Impala's high fun-factor and alive demeanor.

Even the two-speed Powerglide isn't a hindrance. Like all GM automatics, it shifts smoothly, with an authoritative notice of engagement when starting off. Joe says it best: “It



performs as you would expect an early '60s Powerglide to perform.” And while it may not be an ideal transmission for long-distance highway travel at a constant 75 miles per hour, its performance on secondary roads is beyond satisfactory.

In fact, everything about these early Sixties Impalas is just right. They are the kind of collector cars that pay you back with loads of charm, inviting style and ease of maintenance. They ride smoothly, handle well for their size—especially when fitted with radial tires—are extremely comfortable

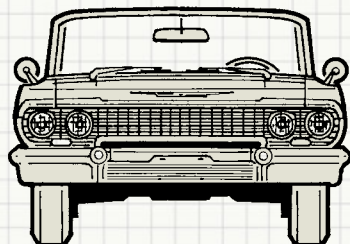
with plenty of legroom front and rear, and are blessed with a trunk large enough for you to haul plenty of parts back from your local swap meet. With so many new reproduction parts now available for 1961-'64 Impalas, regardless of their condition, they can all be restored to the same level of Joe's black beauty. And if it has a straight-six engine under the hood, then all the better. 🐾

EDITOR'S NOTE: To discover all the details that were required to make this Impala SS the beauty that it is today, we will profile its restoration in a future issue. Stay tuned.

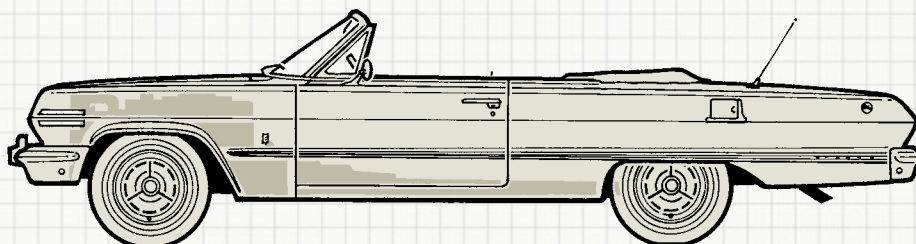


1963 CHEVROLET IMPALA SS CONV.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY RUSSELL VON SAUERS,
THE GRAPHIC AUTOMOBILE STUDIO ©2015 HEMMINGS CLASSIC CAR



60.3 inches



119 inches

SPECIFICATIONS

PRICE

BASE PRICE	\$2,914
PRICE AS PROFILED	\$3,550.75
OPTIONS ON CAR PROFILED	Super Sport equipment (\$161.40); Powerglide transmission (\$199.10); power steering (\$75); two-speed windshield wipers (\$17.25); grille guard (\$19.00); rear bumper guards (\$10); pushbutton radio w/extra speaker (\$56.50); padded dash (\$18.30); left/right door mirrors (\$10.00); whitewall tires (\$31.90); wheelcovers (\$38.30)

ENGINE

TYPE	OHV straight-six, cast-iron block and cylinder heads
DISPLACEMENT	230 cubic inches
BORE X STROKE	3.87 x 3.25 inches
COMPRESSION RATIO	8.50:1
HORSEPOWER @ RPM	140 @ 4,400
TORQUE @ RPM	220-lb.ft. @ 1,600
VALVETRAIN	Hydraulic lifters
MAIN BEARINGS	Seven
FUEL SYSTEM	Rochester single-barrel carb
LUBRICATION SYSTEM	Full pressure
ELECTRICAL SYSTEM	12-volt negative ground
EXHAUST SYSTEM	Single

TRANSMISSION

TYPE	Automatic, two-speed Powerglide
RATIOS	1st: 1.82:1 2ND: 1.00:1 REVERSE: 1.82:1

DIFFERENTIAL

TYPE	Hypoid, open
GEAR RATIO	3:08

STEERING

TYPE	Saginaw recirculation ball, power assist
GEAR RATIO	24:1
TURNS LOCK-TO-LOCK	5.25
TURNING CIRCLE	39 feet, 6 inches

BRAKES

TYPE	Self-adjusting manual drums
FRONT	2.75 x 11 inch drums
REAR	2.00 x 11 inch drums

CHASSIS & BODY

CONSTRUCTION	Separate body on channel X-frame
BODY STYLE	Two-door convertible
LAYOUT	Front engine, rear-wheel drive

SUSPENSION:

FRONT	Unequal-length A-arms with coil springs, tubular shock absorbers, anti-roll bar
REAR	Solid axle with coil springs and tubular shock absorbers

WHEELS & TIRES

WHEELS	Front/rear	7.50 x 14
TIRES	Front/rear	215/75R14

WEIGHTS & MEASURES

WHEELBASE	119 inches
OVERALL LENGTH	210.4 inches
OVERALL WIDTH	79 inches
OVERALL HEIGHT	55.5 inches
FRONT TRACK	60.3 inches
REAR TRACK	59.3 inches
CURB WEIGHT	3,400 pounds

CAPACITIES

CRANKCASE	5 quarts
COOLING SYSTEM	18.5 quarts
FUEL TANK	20 gallons
TRANSMISSION	16 pints
REAR AXLE	4 pints

CALCULATED DATA

BHP PER CU.IN.	1.64
WEIGHT PER BHP	24.28 pounds
WEIGHT PER CU.IN.	14.78 pounds

PERFORMANCE

0-60 MPH	16.8 seconds
¼ MILE	21.6 seconds
TOP SPEED	92 MPH
FUEL MILEAGE	17-18 city 20-21 highway

PRODUCTION

CONVERTIBLE	82,659 (no breakout available for Six or V-8 models)
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PROS & CONS

- + Easy to work on
- + Distinguished styling
- + Lots of reproduction parts
- Just 140 horsepower
- Two-speed Powerglide
- Dashboard too plain

WHAT TO PAY

LOW
\$15,000 – \$20,000

AVERAGE
\$30,000 – \$35,000

HIGH
\$40,000 – \$45,000

CLUB CORNER

**VINTAGE CHEVROLET
CLUB OF AMERICA**
P.O. Box 609
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704-455-8222
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A Sixties Icon

The many virtues of owning a 283-powered 1963 Chevrolet Impala SS hardtop

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

For new-car buyers in 1963 there was a lot to see in Chevrolet showrooms. There were Corvairs, Chevy IIs, Corvettes and the full-size Biscayne/Bel-Air/Impala line—quite a distinctive selection. Yet it was the Impala, now in the third year of its boxy design, that once again was Chevrolet's top-of-the-line model.

By year's end, 704,900 Impalas were produced, as its conservative style connected well with American car buyers.

Today, all 1963 full-size Chevrolets, be they Impalas, Bel-Airs or stripped-down Biscaynes, are highly sought after by Chevy enthusiasts, collectors, hot rodders and low-rider fans alike, thanks to the car's clean lines and handsome good looks, and that distinctively beautiful aluminum tail panel with the round taillamps (six on the Impala, four on the others). And like most American cars of that era, their basic mechanicals make them easy to work on, fun to restore and a joy to own.

One of the most popular Impala models was the two-door

hardtop, with the Super Sport version being the ultimate expression for owners who were more outgoing. Known as RPO Z03, this Super Sport package cost an additional \$161.40 and outfitted purchaser's cars with more elaborate exterior side moldings, special "SS" emblems and wheel covers, bucket seats and a console with floor-mounted shifter, regardless of whether the transmission was a manual or automatic. Oh, and it also didn't matter if the engine under the hood was a V-8 or a straight-six—the SS package could be ordered on any model.

Our feature SS hardtop is owned by Richard Marshall of Cape Coral, Florida, a longtime fan of the 1963 Impala. "When I was 16, my best friend's mother had a 1963 Impala convertible that I fell in love with at first sight," Richard remembers. "I told myself I would own one of those cars someday; that day came in 1970. During my early years when I lived in New Bedford, Massachusetts, I owned two '63s, a '61 and a '64. All great cars, but my true love is a '63 SS. I love its body lines the best, and compared to the '62 model, it has a much better looking dashboard. Its front and rear design is more defined than that on a '61 or '62 Impala and has more styling cues, while the hood on the 1964 Impala is too square for me."

About those early Impalas that Richard owned, he points out just how rare one particular car was. "My first Impala was a 1963 SS. It was white with a blue interior. The person who ordered it new had it built with a three-speed standard shift on the column. It had a half console, which was very unusual. No one believed it was a true SS because of this. I sure wish I still had it; it was quite rare. I have never seen another one built like it."

After several decades of Richard's being Impala-less, this Azure Aqua hardtop is parked in his garage today, thanks to his



Compact in size yet quite responsive, the 283-cu.in. V-8 provides 195hp while returning 22 miles per gallon. It has never been rebuilt.



Bucket seats and floor-mounted shifter and console are hallmarks of the SS package. Like the radio, most of the interior is original, including the faded carpets. This Impala's best feature is its rear end, with that distinctive alloy panel and six taillamps.

thoughtful wife, Marie. "I bought this Impala back in 1995, shortly after my wife spotted it parked on the side of the road near Punta Gorda with a 'For Sale' sign on its windshield," Richard tells us. "It was just as you see it here, all-original including its paint, which was a little faded from the hot Florida sun."

Richard goes on to tell us: "My original intention once I bought the Impala was to bring it back to life again, and drive it as much as I can. It runs like the day it rolled off the assembly line in 1963. As heavy as this baby is, it moves right along. You can set a glass of water on the air cleaner and the water doesn't even ripple—the engine is that smooth. That's how I set the carburetor; I adjust it until the water is still. It purrs like a kitten, and roars like a lion. Everyone that sees it wants to own it."

While this Impala's roar isn't as loud as one equipped with the big-bore 409, or even the high-revving 327, roar it does, thanks to the screaming little 283-cubic-inch small-block V-8 under the hood. With its single two-barrel Rochester carburetor, it puts out 195 horsepower and is backed by the ever-rugged two-speed Powerglide. Richard remembers that the Impala "was called 'Jet Smooth' in 1963, and that is what it delivers."

Considering this Impala's V-8, two-barrel carb and two-speed automatic, it surprisingly delivers 22 miles per gallon when driven on the highway, yet that figure only drops down to around 18 MPG in stop-n-go city traffic. "The engine runs cool most of the time," Richard says. "It does not like small runs; it likes long drives. It seldom overheats, but because of the Florida heat, I may soon install an electric fan to help it run cooler, but during the winter months it runs just fine."

As to the performance of its two-speed automatic, Richard says that "the transmission shifts as smooth as the day it was built. When I take off quickly from a stand still, it gets up and goes, but when I floor it at around 30 MPH, it downshifts and really winds out. For this reason, I really like Powerglides."

Like all Chevrolets from 1963, this Impala is equipped with drum brakes front and rear, and on



“
I call
this Impala SS
my magic
carpet ride...”

this particular car, there is no power assist. Richard has gotten used to the its drums and their distinctive rudimentary manners and drives the car with caution, especially in and around the crowded roads of nearby Fort Myers. He tells us: "I always allow plenty of room between me and the car in front. The drum brakes stop the car pretty well, although I usually pump them up before I come to a stop. However, I don't drive at a high rate of speed on city streets, so they are never an issue."

Riding on a 119-inch wheelbase to help the improved-for-1963 X-frame chassis soak up the bumps better, Richard says that his Impala "handles the road great and really hugs the corners very well; the body has little lean for its size." I can attest to that during a ride that Richard gave me when I met him for our photo shoot in Naples, Florida, last February. The ride certainly was smooth, and reassuring, although sitting in traffic on the Tamiami Trail, the Impala's 210-inch length was quite evident among today's smaller cars. Richard says, "this Impala is not a small baby, but what I enjoy most is its finger-tip steering. I can snap it around then catch it with my hand. It really is fun to drive!"

"I call this Impala SS my magic carpet ride: once I sit behind the steering wheel, I become 16-years old again!" 🏎️



I WANT TO TELL YOU A STORY ABOUT

Henry Ford that you may not know—I certainly didn't. I worked for a few car companies during my career, including Buick and Carroll Shelby's Cobra operation in Las Vegas, so in the mid-1990s following the fall of Communism, I joined a group of volunteers called Citizens Democracy Corps, which sent old goats like me as volunteers to help car companies in Eastern Europe and Russia to make the move from socialism to capitalism.

On one of my early trips, I was sent to an aftermarket company in Nizhny Novgorod, Russia (where Volga cars are built) to help them develop a sales and marketing plan. While there, I was invited to Volga's company museum where they had photo-documented their history from the early 1930s. In one of those early photos, there stood Henry Ford on the production floor of the Volga Car Company. I couldn't believe it and asked the docent about it. She told me that Mr. Ford was so convinced that the automobile was going to revolutionize the world that he came to Russia to help Volga with their production processes and share some of his production techniques with them to help them succeed. I was astounded!

I was at the Ford Museum about a year later and read Mr. Ford's bio, but there was no mention of his trip to Russia. I found the museum's curator and told him about my experience, and he confirmed Mr. Ford's project with Volga. He told me that Mr. Ford had also traveled to the Volkswagen plant in Germany during those days to assist VW with its production plan. When I asked why those travels hadn't been documented, his answer was simple: The American people during those years prior to WWII didn't want to hear about Henry Ford's relationship with either Stalin or Hitler.

Tom Conley
Fallbrook, California

JIM DONNELLY'S COLUMN IN HCC

#128, The Big, Beautiful Bronze Blowtorch, brought back memories of my encounter with the Chrysler turbine car. One of my high school teachers, Mr. M., was one of the lucky people who got to trial-drive a Chrysler turbine. On the day he parked it in our school parking lot, it didn't take long for us to notice the car, find out who drove it, and get to Mr. M. to show us the car.

The car was a terrific design, being

really space-age without being *Jetsons* gaudy. The interior was very tastefully done. The entire car was a delight to the eyes. Mr. M. must have been coached with a demo speech, because he took us on a tour of the car, ending with the engine compartment and an explanation of the turbine and how it worked. As I remember, there was also a kit of several other fuels he showed us that would power the car. But the real deal was a ride in the car. Being a hot rodder for whom the roar of the V-8s and the feel of acceleration were a big thrill, it seemed that this car was very sedate for our tastes. The engine was so quiet, save for a small whining sound. We returned to the parking lot after the ride, not realizing that we were a lucky few who experienced riding in a turbine-powered car.

John Klunder
Columbia, South Carolina



HERE'S AN INTERESTING POSTCARD

with a 1957 Chevrolet open-air tourist limo. Note the three-piece front bumper (West Coast cars had one-piece bumpers, if my memory is correct), the three lights above the windshield, and the dual license plates; the plate on the left appears to be from Nevada. This car must have been titled as a commercial vehicle. I don't know what licensing regulations were in place at the time, but I wasn't aware of the need to use multiple tags for vehicles (other than tractor trailers).

As noted on the card, the car is parked in front of the famous Wawona Tunnel Tree in Yosemite National Park.

Dave Parish
Avon Park, Florida

IN 1976, I EXCHANGED MY TRUSTY

1970 VW Bus for a new Plymouth Volare station wagon. The new car was equipped with the Slant Six engine. Unusual was the choice of the three-speed standard transmission and no power steering. These decisions were based on my experience in the '40s and '50s with Chrysler's standard transmissions, which even without Fluid

Drive, were known for their smooth and easy operation, as compared to Chevrolet's unpleasant habit of hanging up and getting stuck in second gear. The latter predilection was easily corrected by opening the hood and manipulating two levers on the steering column, a greasy operation. The lack of power steering on the Volare was also a choice based on experience with past Chrysler products.

Both choices were sad mistakes, I must admit.

But the car was very attractive and comfortable and served me well for 150,000 miles of daily driving and long family camping trips. When the car approached the 150,000 mile mark, I wrote a letter to Lee Iacocca, then president of Chrysler, and enclosed a photograph of the still good-looking Plymouth. I wrote that I thought he would like a generally positive review of one of Chrysler's less fortunate efforts. I mentioned that except for the sticky gearshift and having to replace the starter religiously every 30,000 miles, I had had no serious problems. I had been advised by the dealer that Chrysler had stopped making its own three-speed transmissions and that the one in my car was sourced from, can you believe it, the same manufacturer that supplied Chevrolet its sticky three-shift transmission.

I received a rather unpleasant letter from some flunky at Chrysler telling me not to bother the president, but to "see my local dealer" if I had any problems with the car. Obviously, Chrysler's customer reps were not used to receiving constructive and generally complimentary letters and nice photographs!

Peter Tveskov
Branford, Connecticut

IN HCC #130'S DETROIT UNDER-

dogs, it's obvious that Milton Stern does not like the styling of the 1980-'82 Thunderbirds. To him, I say, "Beauty lies in the eye of the beholder!"

I own a 1981 Ford Thunderbird; bought it brand new for \$10,543.52. What immediately drew me to this car was the taillamps—they stretched all the way across the rear. Beautiful! It is Midnight Blue with a Sky Blue half vinyl roof and interior, 255-cu.in. V-8, A/C, tilt steering, sunroof, etc. Now, 34

Continued on page 38

Whatever Happened to the Shuttlebug?

Today, let's talk about one of the more interesting small cars that might have been—and one of the most puzzling.

The Shuttlebug was a project started during the gas crisis of 1973-'74 when our good friends at OPEC deliberately cut the supply of oil to the U.S. The ensuing fuel shortage created a panic among drivers, with long lines at gas stations and fuel prices that rose dramatically, ending the era of 50 cent-a-gallon gasoline. Interest in fuel-efficient small cars suddenly blossomed. Overnight, a wild assortment of oddball small vehicles debuted.

The fuel economy issue interested the editors at *Mother Earth News*, a magazine for "...turned on people of all ages." *Mother Earth's* editorial content emphasizes "...alternative lifestyles, ecology, working with nature, and doing more with less." Some people refer to it as the "Tree-Huggers Gazette," though it performs a valuable service in raising awareness about nature and environmental issues.

Pondering the problem Editor-Publisher John Shuttleworth recalled the tiny King Midget car. Back when he was in grade school, a King Midget used to buzz around town. Shuttleworth knew King Midgets could achieve 50-60 MPG, so he decided to design a "modern King Midget," with a fully enclosed body, modern suspension and more safety features. He named it the Shuttlebug.

He knew the King Midget's weak points. Its chain drive went to only one rear wheel, so on acceleration the car tended to veer in one direction, while on deceleration it would veer in the other direction; disconcerting to say the least. And the King Midget's light weight, unusual suspension and lack of aerodynamics gave the front end a marked tendency to float at anything over 40 MPH. He would fix those problems.

Like the King Midget, the Shuttlebug was tiny. The two-seat prototype weighed 860 pounds, just a bit heavier than a King Midget. The Shuttlebug also had a one-cylinder powerplant, a peppy 16-hp Tecumseh industrial engine. Hooked up to this was a torque converter/clutch set-up that provided a variable drive ratio and included a reverse gear.

Shuttleworth and team tried to make the Shuttlebug as safe as possible by installing a hefty roll bar, along with husky 2 x 4-inch box beams for side-impact protection. For simplicity's sake, the body was made in just four parts: two body halves, a tail section and a floor pan. Interior room was snug but comfortable.

Computer analysis said the Shuttlebug should be able to deliver 54 MPG at a steady 55 MPH (the national speed limit back then) and enjoy a top speed of 62 MPH—much higher than the King Midget. The Shuttlebug was also claimed to be capable of driving all day at 55 MPH.

The design team test drove their little Bug on public roads and reported "... the mini-auto runs right down the road with the 'big ones,' it's a lot of fun to drive." They claimed that on the highway it felt "right," meaning it had a good feel of the road and solid control. No major problems popped up during testing. The engine didn't overheat or blow up, and nothing serious broke. In fact, about the only thing that needed improvement was the noise level inside the cabin. With the engine situated in the rear just behind the seats (à la King Midget), it got

quite loud inside the little bug. The team hoped to be able to quiet the noise to an acceptable level without choking off too much engine power with excessive back pressure. They believed an oversize muffler would do the trick. The editors closed their magazine report on the project with a promise to continue refining the car, working out any bugs and making improvements.

And that's where the trail ends. I've been unable to find any follow-up reports or any information on how far the design progressed. The editors had said they might even offer cars for sale, but didn't indicate if they meant to sell plans for building your own, or if they planned to produce complete cars themselves. At this point, it's a mystery.

So, what happened to the Shuttlebug prototype? I confess I'm stumped, so I've decided to relate its tale here in hopes that one of our readers might be able to fill us in on what happened. If you know, please email me at oldemilfordpress@msn.com Thanks! ☺



“The design team test drove their little Bug on public roads and reported ‘...the mini-auto runs right down the road with the “big ones,” it’s a lot of fun to drive’.

years later, I still own this car, and it has 134,305 miles on its odometer. It has been driven throughout the eastern U.S. and Canada, from Maine to Key West, with no mechanical breakdowns.

I do not find the 4.2 V-8 to be underpowered. Cruising along, doing 60 MPH on the Interstate with the cruise control on, if I come up to a car going slower, I punch the pedal and blast around him, and in no time will be doing 90!

Today, these cars are very rare, I believe, due to the fact that Ford recommended changing the oil at 7,500-mile intervals using ordinary 10W-40 oil. But because I changed the oil every 2,000 miles, my T-Bird still has its original engine.
Ralph Hepner
Tampa, Florida

BACK IN HCC #103, WALT GOSDEN

wondered if any Pierce-Arrows sold at the Brewster auction in 1937 still exist. I've had a copy of that auction catalog for many years, and tried to trace those serial numbers. There are now over 2,500 extant Pierce-Arrows logged in my file, but so far, the Brewster cars have not shown up. But you never know. Perhaps next week, in that old abandoned barn just around the next bend....
Bernie Weis
Editor Emeritus Pierce-Arrow Society
Rochester, New York



I HAPPEN TO OWN A 1941 PACKARD series 120 Town Car. It was built by the Rollson Company of New York. Various badges show style number 1920, body 696, firewall number 568607. The ID plate on the firewall indicates 1901-2007. It does not have the customary sidemount fenders and is built with the small eight-cylinder engine.

Rollson made 50 Town Cars: 48 Packards, one Duesenberg, and one for a 1940 Ford V-8, which I used to own. I am most anxious to learn some history on this car, or perhaps a reader can enlighten me.
Casey Hayes
Commerce City, Colorado

ALOHA, RICHARD! REGARDING YOUR column in HCC #132 ("Hot Rods at the Concours"): In 1949, I was stationed at a Navy base in San Diego. A friend of mine stuffed a modified hopped-up Lincoln V-12 into a '32 Deuce Coupe that had not been otherwise modified, except for a Columbia rear end and wide rear "stick."

He loaned me the car one day, and it stalled at an intersection. A cop who was directing traffic walked over and said, "Get that thing the hell out of here!" At that instant, I got it started, tromped down on the accelerator and smoked the tires across the intersection and a quarter way up the block. Looking back through the rearview mirror, I saw the bewildered cop standing with his mouth wide open. Nothing like that "Little Deuce Coupe" and others like it.

Ron Baptista
Mountain View, Hawaii

WONDERFUL JOB IN HCC #132 OF integrating articles by Pat Foster with the feature on the Ajax. I also enjoyed the tie-in with the Charles Nash bid to buy Packard. From the description of Mr. Nash by Mr. Foster and what I have read about Mr. Packard, these two men really must have been kindred spirits in terms of both marketing and product development. It really is a shame that the circumstances were not right for such an acquisition. It seems that Packard was too often shortchanged by the shortsightedness of its management people who themselves felt they could do no wrong. My father owned a 1955 Caribbean, for which he paid almost as much as an Adenauer model Mercedes 300 (Dad fought with General Patton... enough said!), and he loved that Packard enough to keep it until 1983—through three transmissions, two engines and one rear end, not to mention several tops and repaints, along with rust repair.

Many people have intimated that Packard died because it vacated the field to Cadillac, but I suggest that the 110 and 120 models were even more successful than the junior Cadillacs that replaced the stronger-selling La Salles of the 1930s. I had the privilege of owning three Packard 200s from the early 1950s, and these were the successors to the 120 models as far as I could tell. No, there was no high-compression V-8, and the Packard automatic was weak, but was able to cope with the 327 and 356 straight-eight engines. My favorite was a 200 Deluxe with unassisted steering and brakes and

overdrive; it was no in-town car, but was manageable, yet it truly shone once outside the city limits. It stopped better than many of the early power-brake cars, which were too sensitive.

My take on Packard's demise was that it was the extremely poor choice of James Nance of appliance fame. Why buy Studebaker with its debt and outdated factories and then retain them over the Packard plant that, in fact, had produced some of the best cars Packard ever made? Why not finish the job on the development of the V-8, which was a stunner, but had early versions that broke quickly? Lincoln, Hudson, and even Rolls-Royce bought GM's Hydra-Matic... why not Packard? The answer, it seems to me, is that an appliance guy will never a car guy make, unless he starts off that way.
Chuck Whitney
Bowman, North Dakota

RECENTLY I WENT TO A LOCAL CAR

show put on by the AACA. I displayed my 1956 Chevrolet 210 four-door sedan, which all car guys can relate to. Cars like these were the reason behind owning cars made in the USA back in the day. While a bunch of us were talking about our cars and what we would like to do to them, one club member walked over and told me, "It's only a 210 six-cylinder sedan. Don't put a lot of money into it. It will never be worth what you put into it; you'll never get your money back."

It was very upsetting to have someone come out with a remark like that. I was very upset because this person missed the whole point of owning a classic car. Someone with that kind of attitude should not be in a club.
Lynsley Chatfield
Dover Plains, New York

I ENJOY JIM RICHARDSON'S

column each month, and it sounds like he owns a few collector cars that I've been mulling over purchasing. I wonder if I might ask some advice. I have been thinking about either a late-Thirties Packard, Cadillac or Lincoln. I like drivers, not show cars, and I drive them as they were intended to be driven. My budget would be in the neighborhood of \$20K-\$25K. I'm a bit partial to GM and Cadillac, but the idea of a Packard is quite intriguing. And whenever I read about the Lincoln V-12, I get quite jazzed. So I wonder if you might share any suggestions on how to go about

Continued on page 40

'Scuse Me While I Kiss the Sky

Every so often, I like to work on my tan a little bit. So I'll slide the sunroof open—yes, even in Vermont wintertime—and let the ultraviolet rays do their thing. I do this in today's world, where, at least in my opinion, driving a conventional open-top vehicle can be a little dicey. I'm not sure I would want to be in a top-down Camaro on the New Jersey Turnpike when some loon tries an impossible sweep across four lanes and the Camaro goes inverted.

That's not to say I'm against convertibles. There are some valid reasons why they're so highly collectible, and have been for a long time. Example: I've long been a fan of the 1970 Cadillacs. Very clean, angular lines, cavernous interiors, massive torque. If you took a Sedan de Ville, a

Coupe de Ville (my personal favorite) and a convertible, and took them all to an auction, which one do you think would command the biggest hammer price? You got it, it would be the

convertible. It's obviously a more complicated car, with potentially compromised structural stiffness compared to the closed versions, and yet people love them. And you know what? In that era, it was a lot easier to love a convertible. There was less congestion, less manically high-speed driving on the roads, fewer Canadian geese flying overhead. At least the smog situation's gotten better.

Really, to fully appreciate a convertible, you've got to go back to the beginning of the automotive age. There were some practical considerations to owning an open car back then, not the least of which was its prestige. You didn't have a convertible at first, anyway. Instead, you had a touring car, whose roof could be lowered, after a fashion, and after a certain amount of grunting and sweating. The ensuing experience justified the effort. You were sitting upright, up high on the tall seats of, if you were lucky, an Oldsmobile Limited. You towered over the land ensconced in your enormous, regal car. The bystanders weren't just looking at the motorcar; they were looking at you. An open top turned you into a pooh-bah, a potentate, at least as far as the

world at large was concerned.

That is the essence of what these dream machines have always been about. Dial the clock forward a couple of decades. You could have been Clark Gable cruising down Sunset Boulevard in his short-wheelbase Duesenberg roadster, his comely wife, Carole Lombard, by his side. You roll to a stop at a semaphore traffic signal. Everyone turns and gapes. Would-be starlets come spilling out of Schwab's Pharmacy to take in the scene. At the wheel, waiting for the light to change, you're looking straight ahead, smiling slightly, making believe you don't notice any of this. You're the show. The convertible is just your prop.

Or consider this: You know what they say about that wind-in-the-hair feeling. Imagine it's the middle Fifties, and you're living the American dream, with your own tract house out in California. You know, the thing everybody fantasized about doing back then. It's early in the morning,

and you're in your Tri-Five Bel Air convertible with the Power Pack option (or if you're really stylin' and profilin', Rochester fuel injection) with the top lowered. You're easing down the Pacific Coast Highway just past dawn, the Chevrolet's headlamps arrowing through the morning seaside fog that won't completely burn away for several hours. The briny air is positively bracing. You pull off at a lay-by overlooking Malibu. You figure you'll grab a coffee to ward off the morning chill, but first, you're going to gratefully inhale some big deep breaths of curative salt air. This is where it's at. The folding top makes this experience fully visceral like no other type of car can.

No wonder convertible automobiles command such prices and such respect. Driving one at an appropriately dignified pace defines you as someone who not just sees the world around you, but isn't afraid to let yourself be seen. However majestic your automobile is, with the top lowered, it's an extension of you, a way to preen before the public. No other car functions that way other than a convertible. So enjoy the leisurely ride. Don't forget the sunscreen. ☞



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narrowing down the search. Even suggestions on which models might better suit my profile would be appreciated.

Frank Antonides
Anaheim, California

Jim Richardson replies: The Lincoln Zephyr could possibly fit into your budget, and it has the advantage of being basically a Ford as far as the mechanicals go. However, the early V-12 engines are notorious for overheating problems and cracking. It seems that rust builds up at the back of the engine because the water pumps can't keep the coolant moving well enough. I understand this was corrected later, but it was a problem in the 1930s.

I would say that if you buy one of these cars, or a Cadillac or Packard, for that matter, inspect the engine carefully to make sure there are no problems. A compression test would be a good idea, and look carefully at the engine oil to make sure there is no moisture in it.

The Cadillacs of the era were quite reliable, but the flathead V-8s in the less expensive models can have cracked blocks if overheated as well, after 75 years.

Packard 120s and 115s are solid and dependable cars, but the 1936-'37 models may also have heating problems if not maintained properly. However, from 1938 on, they had better water pumps and cooling systems and were very dependable and rugged cars.

Packard and Cadillac parts aren't as easy to come by as those for Fords, but their engines are generally more robust. Others in the hobby might well disagree with me, but the above is my honest opinion after owning 1930s Cadillacs and Packards, and having spent time with Zephyr owners.

I THOROUGHLY ENJOYED THE STORY

on "Mrs. Chrysler's Chrysler" in HCC #132, especially since this car and its owner come from my home turf of Long Island.

Beyond the credit he deserves for saving this unique automobile, owner Howard Kroplick must also be congratulated for his extraordinary willingness to share his collection with the general public, especially children. Instead of hiding his unusual (and expensive) cars in secure garages and avoiding the masses, as some high-level collectors do, he brings his cars out to multiple shows and other events for all to enjoy.

More than once, I have seen a

thrilled kid get a ride-of-a-lifetime in Howard's raucous Alco race car, or an explanation of how to work the Chrysler's automatic locks and windows. Howard could easily be spending his summer weekends in the Hamptons or on a yacht, but instead, he devotes much of his time to educating the public about classic cars.

David Fluhrer
Glen Cove, New York

I JUST FINISHED THE DETROIT

Underdogs article in HCC #132, "Cheerful Chevy Chevette," which brought to mind my Chevette. I purchased a 1984 Chevette in 1986 with 180,000 miles on it; yes, two years old and that many miles. The owner worked for a courier company and used it to run between Cleveland and Columbus, seven days a week, so they were all highway miles. Having driven tractor-trailers with more than a million miles on them, the Chevette's high mileage didn't scare me; so I bought it for \$1,400. It was a black-bumper two-door model with the overhead-cam engine, four-speed, and A/C. With the addition of snow tires, it was a great winter driver. I drove that car to work for 10 years before the floor pans rotted out and the body rusted away; I quit driving it at 245,000 miles. What a great little car that was!

Bob Moncol
Hinckley, Ohio

LOVED MILTON STERN'S FEATURE

about the Chevette. So true. Back in those days you couldn't look in any direction without seeing one parked somewhere, so I too am surprised that you almost never see one anymore.

I owned two Chevettes when I was in high school and college—a 1978 model which I purchased used and then, in 1984 I bought a brand-new Chevette. I loved both of these cars, but I preferred the 1984 model. Somewhere along the way they changed the axle ratios—my 1984 model preferred going into 4th gear at 45 MPH as opposed to the 1978 model, which was happy in 4th gear at 35 MPH. I opted for manual four-speeds in both cars for economy and performance. Both were manual everything, but the steering and brakes were more than up to the challenge without power assist.

I loved the simplicity of the Chevette, but I especially appreciated their almost anvil-like durability; neither of these cars left me stranded. It's been close to 30

years since I drove these cars, but every once in a while they pop up in my dreams. I've owned some special cars, including a 1955 Chevrolet sedan and a 1996 Impala SS, but truth be told, if I could have back any of my previous cars, I'd like to have that 1984 Chevette back most. I just loved that car.

James Sinkler
Algonquin, Illinois

RICHARD, ONCE AGAIN YOU HIT THE

nail on the head with your column in HCC #132—"Hot Rods at the Concours." Although rods and customs have their own shows and their own culture, I agree that some of the groundbreaking designs when viewed in a historical perspective deserve the recognition they are receiving these days at Pebble Beach and the like.

I enjoy all types of vehicles and can appreciate fine vintage cars, restored cars, barn finds, and even rat rods. The fundamental differences in the stock versus modified mind set is the custom guys sometimes say, "Anyone can take apart an old car and repaint and upholster it and put it back together again." And the purists think that anyone can put together a creation with no regard to correctness or authenticity. So it's nice to see that some of these cars are being appreciated by both camps.

Brian Rachlin
Huntingdon Valley, Pennsylvania

GLAD TO READ ABOUT THE SAFETY

concerns Richard raised in HCC #131 with regard to automotive paint. Having spent over 17 years managing safety for both a large transportation company and a high tech manufacturer I have observed that safety for people outside of the work site is often not stressed enough. The hobbyist will have chemicals in many forms in his garage: lubricants, thread compounds, carb cleaners, liquid gasket, brake cleaners or fluid, etc. Many if not most of these are toxic to human organs, particularly the liver, kidneys, lungs and skin. Personal protective equipment in our home shop inventory is imperative.

Jim Hohmeister
Salt Lake City, Utah

P.S. Thanks for sharing your cancer story. It takes courage to do that, and it provides inspiration for others. I believe the more we share the difficult aspects of our lives, the more we connect as unique individuals and the more we are valued for our humanity.

The Cord 810—Unlike Anything Else on the Road

As I was preparing to write this column, it occurred to me that I've rarely written about the experiences I've had with the actual automobiles that have made me a confirmed devotee of Classic cars.

I've been lucky enough to own a number of Classic automobiles, but my pockets weren't deep enough to allow me to keep all of them. I probably have a lot of company in that respect.

Like many Classic car enthusiasts, I was young when I first read about the Cord 810. As has been stated so many times by so many writers, the Cord was like nothing else on the road when it was introduced.

Look at the other cars on display at the 1936 auto shows, and you'll see what I mean.

Finding a Cord 810 (or a 1937 model 812) isn't a problem. There always seem to be a few for sale, often by disgruntled and disillusioned owners who have decided to move on to a more conventional automobile.

One characteristic that set the Cord apart from the pack in 1936 is what still sets it apart today—its mechanical quirkiness. The car was engineered and built on an incredibly tight budget. Its front-wheel drive and pre-selector shifting mechanism are unique—and problematic. The car can be very discouraging for the average collector-car enthusiast.

After I bought my Cord, a local, older mechanic who knew me too well, smiled and said, "David, that's a mechanic's car." He wasn't the only one to make such a comment. Upon learning I'd bought the Cord, my father-in-law chuckled, "David, you bought a lemon," and went on to recount how one of his college classmates had purchased a Cord in 1937 and, "it came home every Sunday night on the back of a tow truck."

That was probably a bit of an exaggeration, of course. But I did have my share of problems with the car and probably learned more about mechanics than with any car I'd previously

owned. It was not uncommon for me to be working on it, phone cradled between my head and shoulder, as a Cord restorer walked me through yet another repair.

The Cord I bought had been partially restored. Mechanical work was completed, and the interior installed. But the repaint wasn't the

best, and a local body shop took on the task of stripping and repainting the car. When it was completed, I drove it to the Meadow Brook Concours d'Elegance, followed by two trips to Auburn, Indiana, for the annual Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Club reunion. Driving the Cord to

Auburn on Route 30 in the early morning, gazing at that illuminated instrument panel, is something I'll always remember.

In fact, that was something about all of the Classic cars I've owned over the years; I wanted to know what it was like to drive them. And I wasn't going to have that experience by driving it on and off a trailer.

In the end, I sold the Cord to buy another unique automobile—an all-original and unrestored Locomobile 48. Two more different cars, one could not find. Each was enjoyable in its own way, yet I wish I still had both of them.

I was fortunate enough to have visited, on several occasions, with the Cord's designer, Gordon Buehrig. In his own words, the Cord 810 was proof that a fine design was not enough to sell a car. He acknowledged the car's mechanical shortcomings and credited modern Cord enthusiasts with keeping this historic automobile on the road.

Gordon was one of the most gracious individuals I've ever met. During one of our meetings, I was working on an article about him and the development of the Cord for *Industrial Design* magazine. He carefully listed all of the people who worked with him. So many years after the fact, he could have taken all the credit, but that wasn't his style. ☞



PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE AUBURN-CORD-DUESENBERG AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM



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Driving the
Cord to Auburn
on Route 30
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//



Model 60 Motoring

Exploring the history and ownership of a rare 1927 Chrysler coupe

BY TERRY SHEA • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

Rarely do you see any prewar Chryslers at car shows today. Lots of Fords, of course, and some GM cars, a Nash or two, but not often any Chryslers. So, it was with great enthusiasm that we came across this 1927 Chrysler Model 60 coupe at the AACA's Winter Meet last year in Port St. Lucie, Florida. The interest surrounding the car



throughout the weekend warranted a closer look.

Walter P. Chrysler's eponymous company started with the 1924 introduction of a six-cylinder-powered automobile bearing his name. This revolutionary car with its high-compression L-head engine also included several other features never before seen on a car that would reach such high production: four-wheel hydraulic brakes, aluminum pistons, full-pressure oil system with a replaceable oil filter, a tubular front axle, and a model name—the B-70—that reflected the powerful car's top speed.

Born from the remnants of the Maxwell and Chalmers companies, Chrysler Corporation's start has been well documented (See our profile in *HCC* #128). Armed with Walter Chrysler's skills as a manager and the advanced engineering of the B-70, Chrysler started with a bang, vaulting into seventh place on the sales charts by 1927, moving some 182,195 cars that year, a figure Chrysler would not eclipse until 1965. Of course, by 1927, Chrysler had expanded its lineup to four distinct ranges.

The entry-level Series—or "Model"—50 featured a 109-

inch wheelbase with four-cylinder power. The Series 50 was essentially a continuation of the Maxwell line, albeit with Chrysler touches throughout the design and details. All-new for the 1927 model year, the Series 60 sported six-cylinder power, but still rode on that same 109-inch wheelbase inherited from the Maxwell. The Series 70, with a straight-six, used a chassis with a 112.75-inch wheelbase and the Series 80 featured 120-, 127- and even 133-inch wheelbases as it was the Imperial line, the highest-spec Chryslers designed to compete with the likes of Lincoln, Cadillac and Packard.

Underneath the Model 60's taut and handsome bodywork lay all the Chrysler innovations that drew people to its cars in the first place. In detail, the L-head straight-six displaces 180.2 cubic inches from a three-inch bore riding on a long 4.25-inch stroke. Breathing through a single Stromberg carburetor and sparked by Remy ignition, the engine was rated at 54 horsepower when new, which was ample enough to take the 2,780-pound car to a healthy top speed exceeding its 60 MPH rating from Chrysler, hence the Model 60 name.



Like most prewar automobiles, the cabin is narrow and the instrument panel plain. The enameled oval panel includes gas-amp-oil pressure gauges and a drum-type speedometer. Shown below are the headlamp switch, choke and water temp gauge. Note the thick wood steering wheel.

In 1927, Chrysler sold the Model 60 with 28 x 5.25-inch tires, slightly smaller than the original 30-inch tires offered when the model debuted in 1926. Likewise, wood artillery wheels were standard, but in 1927, during the middle of the model year, Chrysler made steel disc wheels available. The white, backlit instrument panel of our feature car also marks this model as being later in the Model 60's production run for 1927.

At \$1,195, the Model 60 was fairly priced, perhaps double that of an equivalent Model T, but competitive for a six-cylinder automobile. For the cost of the Buick of its day, and offering its own form of luxury and sophistication, the Model 60 helped cement Chrysler's reputation for bold engineering that would last for generations. If the Chrysler Corporation was always seen as going its own way, then it did so from its beginnings.

The Model 60 two-door Coupe featured here was just one of eight body styles Chrysler offered the model in for 1927. And, from what the car's owner, Pedro Aquilera, has been able to find out, one of the rarest. "It's very, very rare," says Pedro. "I have been able to find one four-door model, restored, in good condition. But I have never seen another two-door model like this one here."

Pedro owns no other collector cars, but, with an eye on acquiring something from the late Twenties, likely a Chevrolet

or Ford in his mind, he came across this lovely prewar Chrysler while attending a car show in his hometown of Port St. Lucie, Florida, a few years ago. The only problem was that it was not for sale. Searching far and wide, Pedro was unable to find another one like it. In addition to seeking an equivalent car, Pedro started working on the Model 60's owners, who had possessed the car for quite some time. He wore them down until they could work out a deal that kept both parties happy.

For his effort, Pedro considers it his good fortune to be able to call this Model 60 his own, telling *Hemmings Classic Car*, "Because of pure luck, I got a very rare car. I think this is the only one known that is in this condition. It took me about eight months to convince the people to sell it to me at a price I could afford."

But the Chrysler was not perfect when he got it. "They had it for more than 30 years," Pedro says. "It was a handout—a present—of her uncle, and the uncle was the one that restored the car about 35 years ago. When I got it, it was fairly good. The paint was cracking and the interior, which was original, with the original material, needed replacement. And that's all I have done to the car, actually. It's repainted, in the same color as original."

Pedro turned to a couple of friends in the business to refinish the car inside and out. The body shop handled the



Single one-barrel updraft Stromberg carburetor provides fuel to the 180.2-cubic-inch straight-six flathead engine, which develops 54 horsepower at 3,000 RPM. The Chrysler's ride is very smooth and comfortable, thanks to the Weed Levelizer friction cable "shocks."





Twelve-spoke wooden artillery wheels are original to the car, and feature a small hubcap embossed with the letter "C" for Chrysler.

refinishing, opting to follow Pedro's wish for originality, using a single-stage lacquer for the top coat. "The original interior was a brownish color," Pedro recalls, "but it was faded and in poor condition." For this, Pedro went to another friend who does interior work for private aircraft. Opting for something more practical and usable than the original mohair, Pedro had his friend install vinyl seat covers, blue on the surfaces and black on the sides, mirroring the exterior of the car. While it may not be original, it certainly brightens up the cabin.

After purchasing the Chrysler, Pedro joined the Treasure Coast Vintage Car Club, the local AACA-affiliated club, along with his wife, Trini. The couple puts only a few hundred miles a year on their vintage Chrysler, but they enjoy taking it to shows and sharing their car. He admits that learning to drive with the three-speed transmission takes some time. "You really have to learn how to drive this car," he says. "When I first got it, I spent about three or four days grinding gears all the time. But now, I got to know the car better and I can drive it without grinding. You have to concentrate on what you are doing. It is not easy. It is something that you have to get used to." As for double-clutch-

ing, which Pedro does not do, "It would help, but I think that in order to shift it, you really have to hear the engine and give it enough time so the gear will engage the transmission."

But once you get going and get used to the car's operation, Pedro implores, it's really pretty easy to drive. "It has a very low first gear because you cannot go more than 5 MPH, and it's immediately looking for the second gear. And then you take it to about 10 to 12 MPH and it's definitely looking for the third gear. And that's it! Once you shift into third, it's like an automatic car. Even when you drive into the corners, it will turn and it still has enough power to keep going. You don't have to downshift.

"I like the car the way it is, even without power steering," Pedro adds. "It's a Model 60 because it's supposed to run 60 MPH, but the most that I dare to push it is 45 MPH. And it runs very smooth, very straight; it doesn't pull to either side. It's nice! Once you get it rolling, it's amazing the suspension it has. It's very, very nice. You can take a bump and it's very smooth. It rides very well."

Even now, Pedro still hasn't seen another 1927 Chrysler Model 60 coupe in the same condition. He plans to keep it in the family, but if none of his children want it, then he is prepared to have it end up in a museum rather than hot-rodded out. With a car that is seemingly more unique with each passing day, we can't say we blame him, even though we love to see these cars driven, as Pedro and Trini do now. ☺



“You can take a bump and it's very smooth.

It rides very

well.”



OLD GOLD

Mom's 1966 Ford Mustang has brought top-down pleasure to four generations



BY MARK J. McCOURT • PHOTOGRAPHY BY RICHARD LENTINELLO

The original Mustang was famously all things to all people. For the Eiselben family of St. Louis, Missouri, a 1966 model got rave reviews playing the dual roles of Mom's grocery-getting, kid-shuttling daily driver and Dad's fun-in-the-sun weekend convertible. It had a place of honor in the family garage 49 years ago, and it still does,

in son Karl Eiselben's garage, today. This Mustang convertible may have transitioned from all-weather transportation to concours-winning trailer queen through the decades, but "Old Gold" remains in the family's expert care, and will continue to make memories for its purchasers' great-grandchildren.

A 1962 Rambler American convertible was the first occupant of the second bay of Roland and Alice's garage, and that homely-cute AMC—purchased new with white paint and top over a gold interior—was the originator of the dual-role family car. It remained in service until Karl's older brother Kurt bought it from them.

Karl—who currently lives in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida—was a nine-year-old auto enthusiast, building scale models of Mustangs and Shelbys, when his father settled on a real Mustang convertible as the Rambler's replacement. "I went with him to look at several of them," he recalls. "Dad wanted the 289 V-8 so it would have some 'go,' but he also wanted an automatic and power steering, so Mom could comfortably drive it. When my mom saw this car sitting in the corner of Cavalier Ford in St. Louis, she was sold—she knew it was the one."

The sporty Ford's striking Antique Bronze paint and comple-



mentary two-tone Parchment-Saddle interior were set off with a black vinyl top and accessory 14 x 5-inch Styled Steel wheels. It had the desired powertrain, and much more; also included were a power top (\$52.95), Rally-Pac gauges (\$69.30), the Visibility Group of mirrors and two-speed electric wipers (\$29.81), and individual accessories like a center console and passenger mirror. "Dad negotiated with the dealer to add the trunk-lid luggage rack, the engine chrome dress-up kit and the undercoating that would protect it during those Missouri winters," he explains.

The 289-cu.in. V-8 was a nice upgrade over the base straight-six engine, this car's being the C-code version sporting an Autolite 2100 two-barrel carburetor. With its 9.3:1 compression ratio, this V-8 made 200hp at 4,400 RPM and 282-lb.ft. of torque at 2,400 RPM, which was plenty for the circa-2,800-pound convertible, even considering that optional three-speed C-4 Dual-Range Cruise-O-Matic automatic. As Karl would later learn, this powertrain provided more "go" than the standard, unassisted 10-inch drum brakes could comfortably handle; "You'd

be better off using a rock and chain to slow the car down than using the brakes it has!

"I was with my parents when they took delivery of the car. It was an exciting time for us—back then, when you bought a new car, it was really something special. We started calling it 'Old Gold', right away, a play on the paint color name," he remembers. Their special soft-top was one of 72,119 convertibles built for 1966, out of an incredible 607,568 Mustangs—1966 represented the best-ever model year of Mustang production. "It was an everyday driver that was also the fun car for the family. Mom would have the top down most of the summer. And because Dad enjoyed convertibles, we always took good care of it. It certainly got used, but it was never abused."

Karl had an after-school job during his high school years, and as his parents had done for his brother seven years earlier, they consented to sell him the Mustang. "Growing up with my dad, I'd helped him take care of the car in hopes that I could someday buy it. When that came to pass in 1973, I drove it



Karl's father negotiated the two-barrel 289 V-8 engine's appealing chrome dress-up kit as part of the car's initial purchase. The engine was preemptively rebuilt at 100,000-miles—after the restoration was finished—but the original pistons were reused.



every day to school and work, and all weekend," he says. "I had a lot of fun with it. But I still remember the day when it sat in the school parking lot, and kids from a rival school drove through and threw orange paint around, hitting my car and a Chevelle 396 convertible I always parked next to. As I was walking out of school, I wondered why there was a big crowd standing around our cars. I found orange paint all over our tops and back windows, and dripping down the sides. We filed police reports, but I don't know if anyone was ever caught."

Virtually all of the vandals' paint was removed—"To this day there are still a few small spots on the car. I've left them there purposely because I know where they are," he laughs. Old Gold got a new coat of Antique Bronze when Karl was still in high school; he worked with his body shop-owning friend to sand and respray the body. The Ford then brought its youthful owner to college, and was his sole transportation there for

a time, as well; "I left it at school one weekend when I went to visit my sister, and when I got back, I found it had a cracked windshield. I wanted to protect it and keep it garaged, so I drove it back home to my parents' home and bought a 1966 Mustang coupe as a replacement daily driver. I used that coupe for the duration of college."

Roland and Alice didn't mind this car returning, as they hadn't replaced it with another convertible, that body style largely having fallen out of favor in the mid-1970s; they enjoyed using it sparingly in the summer months. As a third car, it mostly sat, but it did come out with the top down on sunny days, for trips to the local ice cream shops. Karl got married, and life's distractions meant the Mustang wasn't a top priority until 1990, when he attended a show put on by St. Louis's Show-Me Mustang Club. This was where he met kindred spirits who convinced him to treat Old Gold to a concours-quality restoration.





"When I decided on the restoration, it was a pretty easy job, because we'd taken care of the car. It may be the only Missouri Mustang that still has its original floors!" he laughs. "It had about 90,000 miles on it. There was very little rust, a little bit in the front fenders. Rather than cut that out, it was easier to replace the fenders with rust-free original fenders. The driver's door tags have never been removed."

Karl turned to another old friend from high school, Bruce Zbaron, who owns Smitty's Auto Body in nearby Valley Park, Missouri, for help with this restoration. "Just like I did in 1973, I did the sanding work for Bruce," he recalls. "He would prime it and give the car back to me for the sanding. I would sand it and think I had it perfect, but he'd put circles and arrows all over it, giving it back and telling me to do it again! I eventually got it straight. I also replaced the interior. I have sweat equity in this car, absolutely."

A major upside to restoring an early Mustang is that so many parts are available. But rather than buy new reproduction parts, Karl made a conscious choice to reuse as many of his car's original parts as possible. As for the brightwork, the factory bumpers were rechromed, and the original stainless trim was polished and put back on. He also resisted the temptation to alter the car with readily available upgrades like air conditioning, the GT trim or a Pony interior, reasoning, "That's not the way my parents bought it, so the car will have to stay the way it is." And well after the body's restoration was completed, the car's 100,000-mile milestone prompted its owner to give the 289 V-8 a preventative refurbishment.

In the years since it was finally finished, the



This example was heavily optioned from the factory, and it came with the C4 automatic transmission, power steering, Rally-Pac steering column gauges and the center console. Its owner resisted the temptation to upgrade it with more accessories.



Eiselbens' Mustang has earned many trophies and much admiration, the car having won Mustang Club of America and AACA Senior Grand National awards. But more than that, it's brought them together. "My dad passed away in 1994, but before that, the Mustang Club of America's publication, *Mustang Times*, did a cover shoot on Old Gold with my dad, myself and my son on it, and called it, 'Like Father, Like Son, Like Son.' That's the only picture I have of Dad, Eric and myself with the car."

He continues, "I've done father-son and father-daughter weekends with it at car shows. My children were with me every time we'd go to local, regional and national shows with Old Gold. They would help polish and clean, and it was always great fun for the family. It really has been something all of us, as a family, could work together on, and they have as much attachment to the car as I do."

Today, the Mustang's odometer reads roughly 106,000 miles, and although it's now a pampered show car that only comes out on nice days, it still transports Karl like a time machine. "It's been a lot of fun for a lot of years. I can't believe how many years... 49! I keep looking at it and saying, 'One of us is getting really old,'" he laughs. "Now that my kids are having kids, it will be a real thrill to ultimately have the fourth generation riding in it. That's pretty amazing."

“Now that my kids are having kids, it will be a real thrill to ultimately have the fourth generation riding in it. That's pretty amazing.”



driveable **dream**

Blue-Light Special

What this low-cost 1950 Buick Model 41D lacks in options, it makes up for in charm and driveability



WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH

Buick's Special, introduced mid-1949 as a preview of the rest of the 1950 models, was basically equipped, created to expand Buick's base among lower-priced car buyers. There wasn't a horn ring, turn signal, or clock in sight.

Pricing was low: the 41D Special started at just \$1,983. The ploy worked. Model-year production was a record 558,439 units, which included the mid-1949 Specials, good enough to keep Buick in fourth place in the sales race. Of those, the 41D sedan was the best-selling Buick of the year, with 141,396 leaving showrooms; more than 25 percent of all Buicks sold that year were 41D sedans. This

example sticks to the Special's plain brief, with only an underseat Weather Warden heater and a Sonomatic radio among the options list. The Fireball straight-eight engine was the standard 6.3-compression, 115-horsepower version. The Dynaflo transmission was available, of course, even on low-line Specials, but this example wasn't equipped as such.

In the fall of 1957, owner Herb Met-

tler needed a reliable car to get to Billings Senior High School in Billings, Montana. Just a car. In those days, meaning when you were in high school, any car you get your hands on is going to be a terrific memory-maker. What that car is, when you're broke, is often a matter of fate and availability, rather than choice.

Fate and availability. Timing and happenstance. What Herb found—or



rather, what Herb's dad found—was a clean 1950 Buick Super, a green two-door hardtop with black top and manual transmission, for the princely sum of \$190. "I drove that car hard," Herb recalls. "There was no daytime speed limit in Montana in those days, and I was driving it at 80 MPH or more regularly. It rode and handled so sweetly." And for two years—his sophomore and junior years—the Super was Herb's ticket to school and freedom. For him, any 1950 Buick would forever be special.

And then ... "I sold it," Herb confesses. "I went to Tacoma, Washington, for my senior year of high school, and I sold that car so I'd have some money when I got there. Eventually I bought a 1948 Ford." The resigned chuckle in his tone suggests

that, while he'd have plenty of other cars in the years to come, he'd made a foolish decision, and was spoiled by his Buick's solid-performing attributes.

That Super made enough of an impression, however, that Buicks became something of a fascination for Herb. He's owned dozens of collector cars over the decades since, but the ones that come to stay seem to favor the tri-shield marque.

Of the 12 or so old cars in his current collection, Herb has five Buicks, from a 1927 Brougham to a 1964 Skylark that he's taking to his 55th high school reunion. Sitting comfortably in the middle of the range is another 1950 Buick with manual transmission. This one, however, is a four-door Special, body style 41D.

"Around 1990 or so, I was checking ads for a pickup truck for my son, and I





It looks fancy and special now, but in its day, this was a shockingly plain interior motif for a Buick—little filigree beyond handles, stalks and the radio (not even a horn button!). The prominent speedometer seems quite optimistic, while the odometer has been around once.



saw a 1950 Buick for sale. I called, and it was only a mile and a half from my house." Kismet, surely—and a sign that Herb was wise enough not to ignore. Turns out, this Special Deluxe sedan (the Deluxe model signified by the Special fender script and body-side molding, among other bits) was also a local car all its life. It was purchased new at Lithium Buick, in Pasco, Washington, barely 50 miles from Herb's home in Waitsburg.

"The seller bought it the year before, from the estate of the lady who had owned it since 1952." It's been a Pacific Northwest car for its entire life: "She bought it at 14,000 miles or so in 1952, and it had around 108,000 miles when we bought it in 1990. It's got more than 126,000 miles on it now." And, as often seems to be the case with old cars and rarely with newer

ones, "that owner kept records for everything from her buying it in 1952 up until the last entry in 1977. It must have been sitting since then." Herb paid \$1,500 for it—and it came with a service manual and a Tydol Oil banner rolled up in the trunk.

Although this Buick wasn't identical to the car that Herb owned years ago—it was a Special rather than a Super, and a four-door sedan rather than a two-door hardtop—30 years after the fact, it had one thing most surviving Buicks of that era didn't have: a manual transmission. That, more than anything else, sealed the deal.

And in the quarter-century since Herb put his name on the title, what's he done to the car? Nothing. Well, nothing of note. "Evidently, the lady polished that car frequently, and she rubbed the paint off along the ribs, clean down to the primer.

So a friend of mine painted it the original Calvert Gray, but that was more than 20 years ago now. I keep it shined up with Meguiar's compound and spray wax, but with so many cars it never gets out so much that it really gets dirty.

"Beyond that, it's just been general maintenance: an oil change with Castrol 10W-40, whatever it takes to keep things running. I did put a clutch in it; the first driving tour we took it on had some steep hills, and it was slipping. Other than that, there's really been nothing else needed. It had an electrical short one time, and I fixed that by installing a new fuse, and I've put in new batteries a couple of times. The engine is like it came from the factory. It's a trouble-free car, and I've never had a problem with it." What's more, "nothing in the old lady's logbook indicates she did anything except change oil and put gas in it." It barely had any supermarket dents, much less a fender-bender. Sometimes, there is truth in advertising: it's not every car that is badged "Special" in inch-high chrome lettering on the front fender.

Driveability was key, as the Mettlers enjoy going on local, multiday driving tours around the region. No wonder they've taken this Special on so many of those. "The Spokane Model T Club, and car clubs in Walla Walla and Lewiston, all organize driving tours. They do one a year, and each year another club is responsible for organizing it, so it rotates. The first time I took the Buick was shortly after we got it, and on long tours it gets 20 to 22 MPG at 60 MPH," Herb reports. "The old Super I had would get that kind of mileage too, but I lived in Montana and drove it harder. They're such nice handling, nice-driving cars, these Buicks."

We took a quick spin, and there were a number of things that stood out. That steering wheel is huge and rather more in our laps than we might have preferred, but there was terrific head and shoulder room all around. Twist the key to "On," and hit the starter hiding there under the gas



The Buick's hood is hinged on either side for easy access to the so-smooth-you-don't-know-it's-idling 248-cubic-inch, 6.3-compression, 110-hp straight-eight engine.





pedal as was the Buick way in those days. The clutch picks up at the very bottom of its travel, and the shifter on the column makes you wonder why they bothered ever moved it to the floor. Acceleration from the big straight-eight was glacial but constant, doubtless equal parts 115 hp, gearing and 3,745-pound shipping weight. It's a combination that Herb insists has seen 22 MPG at steady cruising. The rear-end gear ratio is said to be a 3.91, but that suggests a far snappier acceleration curve than we experienced. That said, it's very



Beyond one repaint, itself two decades old, little beyond standard maintenance has been done to this Deluxe-model Special. Even the upholstery is original and unrepaired.

happy cruising at 60 MPH, judging by our short time behind the wheel.

We expected a floaty ride (even *Motor Trend* used the dreaded M-word—"marshmallow"—in its period road test), and did not receive one. It was smooth, but with no float or flutter, you got the sense that the road was beneath you at every revolution of the wheels. As a bonus, there was considerably less lean on the open road than you might otherwise consider from an 80-inch-wide car with a 59-inch front track. (We suspect that the radial tires, installed by the owner, helped in this regard; so, surely, did the standard front anti-roll bar.)

Steering was surprisingly firm at all speeds, and we found ourselves either under-steering or over-steering it—not that we're hanging the tail out, but it was simplicity itself to turn the wheel too much and end up over the center line on the road, or not enough and drift out over the rumble strip on the shoulder. It's not slop in the system by any means, but unfamiliarity with the car and roads. Time would realign our instincts and inputs.

It also felt solid, in that way that only factory-built cars feel solid and together. The paint isn't the shiniest, the upholstery is threadbare and coming apart in spots, but, darn it, this car has been together for 65 years. There's a reason it hasn't been taken apart yet: functionally, it hasn't needed to be. It really is the definition of a Driveable Dream, this 1950 Buick Special. It's not rare, or hugely valuable, but it's

a car that was purchased to be driven and enjoyed, a car that's so loved and appreciated that it doesn't want or need to come apart to enhance its pleasure. It's good enough to last two-thirds of a century without having to be rebuilt, efficient enough that it's the bucks-down choice for elegant vintage motoring in the modern age.

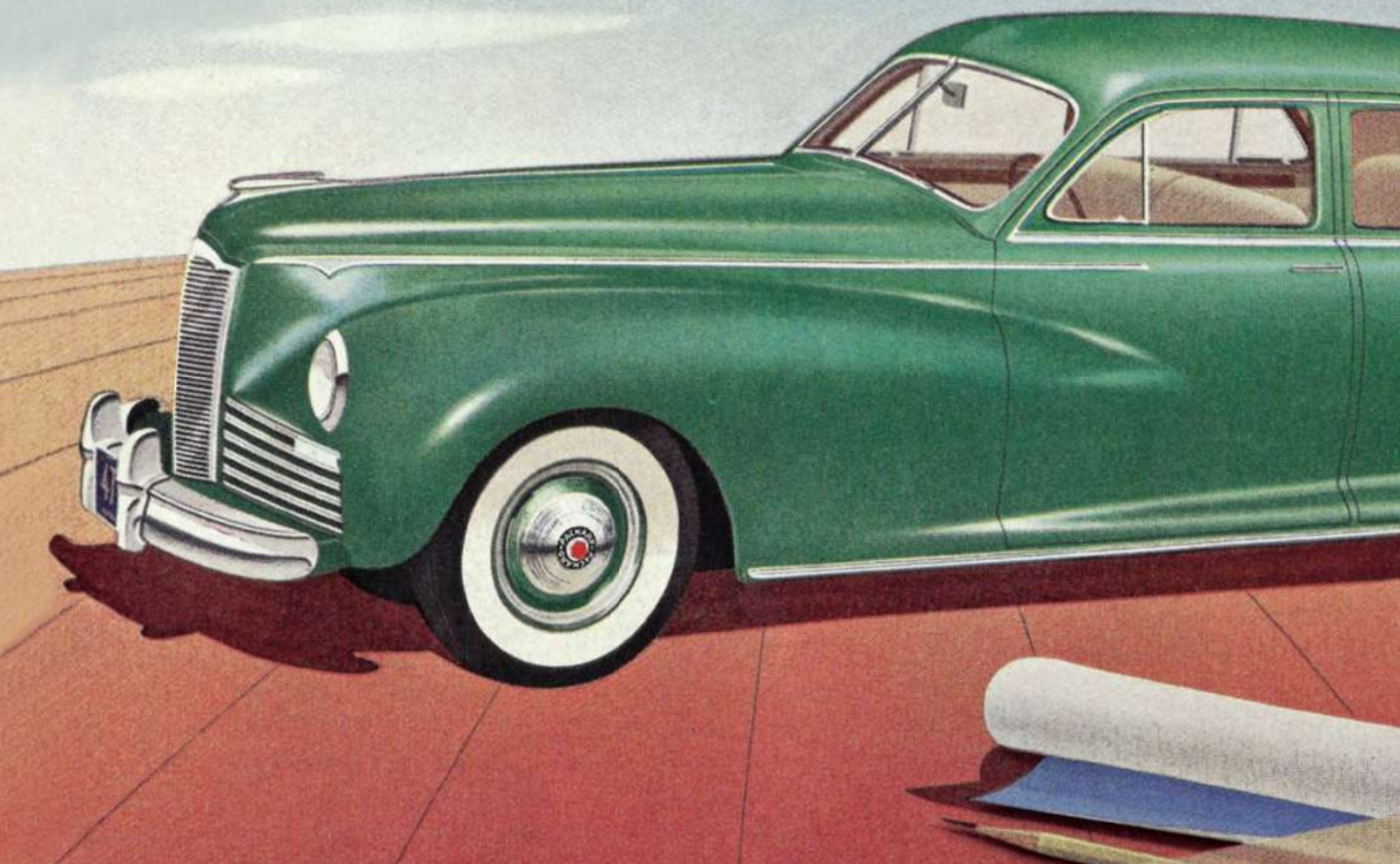
If that's not Special, then what is? 🐼

“

*They're such
nice handling,
nice-driving
cars,
these Buicks.*

”





Packard

Heading into the postwar era with sleeker designs and bolder styling – Part III

BY PATRICK FOSTER • ILLUSTRATIONS COURTESY OF THE PAT FOSTER COLLECTION

Initially Packard's 1941 model-year plans seemed to include just another round of styling updates rather than the complete revamp that was sorely needed. However, April 1941 brought a tremendous surprise with the unveiling of an all-new Packard model priced between the One Twenty and the One Sixty: the ultra-modern, smoothly-styled Clipper.

With sweep-through fenders, hidden running boards, a low roofline and narrow radiator-style grille, the Clipper was a revelation, signaling a new era in Packard styling. Offered in a single four-door sedan

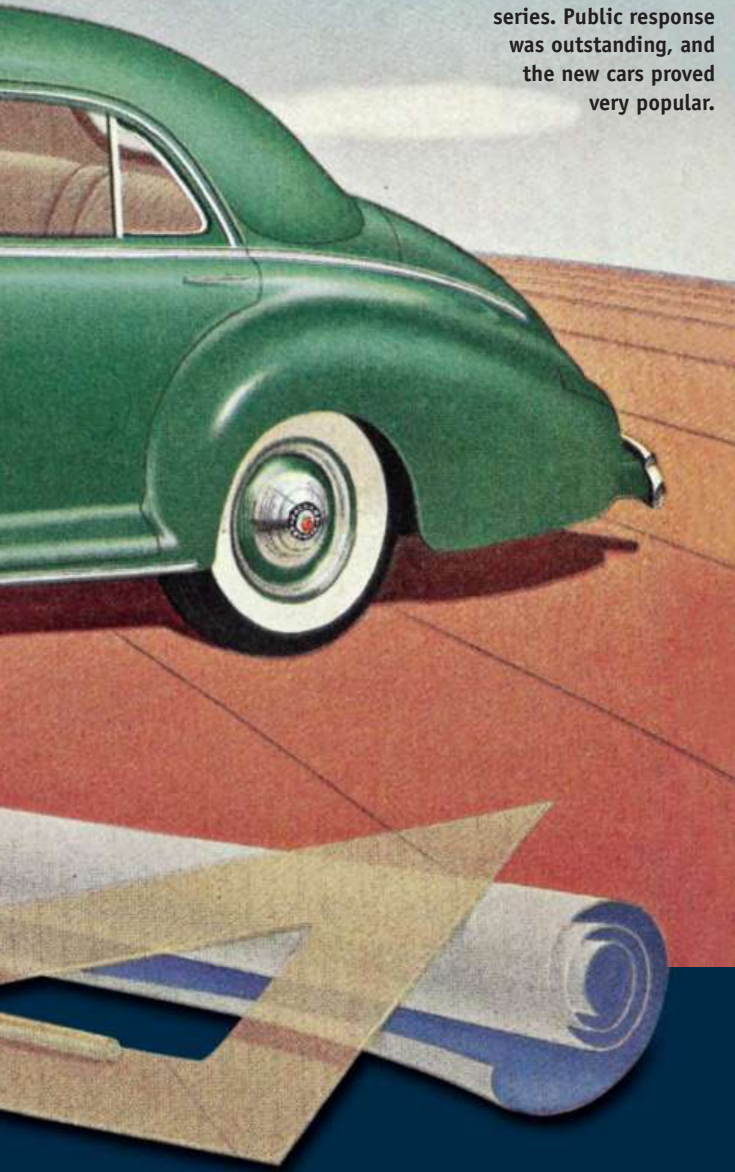
on a 127-inch wheelbase and powered by a 282-cu.in. straight-eight engine, it was priced at a quite reasonable \$1,420. The Clipper was an instant hit, with more than 16,000 sold by year end.

Clipper styling proved so popular it was extended for the 1942 model year to include all Packards, save for special models including convertibles and the Darrin Victoria. The 1942 Clipper One Sixty and One Eighty senior models wore the distinctive new styling on 127-inch to 148-inch wheelbases. The similarly new Clipper Six and Clipper Eight rode on a shorter 120-

inch wheelbase.

Sales during the first months were tremendous. Then Japan attacked the United States in December 1941, and by January 1942 car production was halted and would not restart until the war ended. After the war, Packard, like all the other auto manufacturers, resumed production of its prewar automobiles with only minor changes. Series names were Clipper Six, Eight and Deluxe Eight for the Junior models (priced \$1,680 to \$1,869) and Custom Super Clipper for the pricey Senior models (\$2,913-\$4,496). In between was the Su-

In mid-1941, Packard introduced all-new styling with its fascinating Clipper series. Public response was outstanding, and the new cars proved very popular.



There was little change in the Clipper sedan for the 1942 model year. Sales were strong, but were short-circuited early in the year by the start of World War II when automobile production was halted.



New for 1942 was the Clipper Club sedan body style, a handsome-looking two-door with a striking and dramatic fastback roofline.

per Clipper, priced at \$2,241-\$2,290.

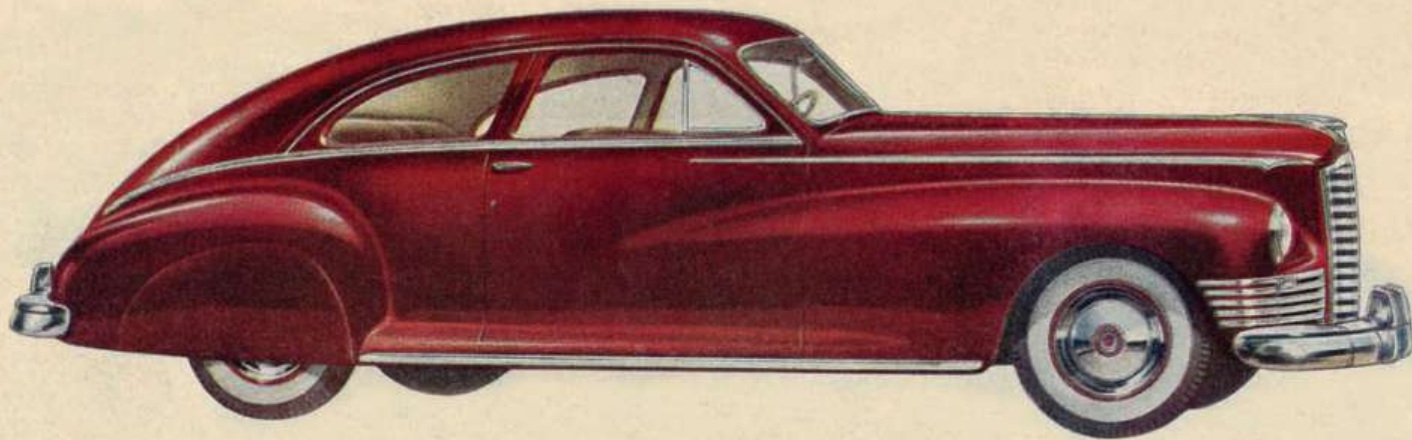
In an effort to appeal to a wider market, Packard produced a broad array of models for the 1946 model year, including taxicabs, when it should have concentrated on producing more top-line automobiles to help rebuild its luxury image. Pent-up demand was strong; Packard could have sold many more of its premium models than it did.

The 1947 models were pretty much carried over from 1946, and was the last year for domestic-spec cars equipped with straight-six engines. Their demand re-

mained robust, and the company probably should have continued the series through 1948, then brought out a completely new car for 1949—its 50th anniversary year. However, because of the large expense involved in producing an all-new automobile, Packard management instead decreed a major facelift of the existing Clipper body, hoping to come up with something that would look all-new but at a greatly reduced tooling cost. The result appeared for the 1948 model year, with new model names that included the Eight and Deluxe Eight in the Junior series, the big Custom

Eight in the Senior line, and the Super Eight in between.

As before, Junior models rode on a 120-inch wheelbase, while most Seniors rode on a longer 127-inch chassis. Packard was able to expand beyond just two- and four-door sedans this year, adding convertibles and wood-trimmed station sedans to the line-up. A small number—less than 2,000—Super Eight limousines and seven-passenger sedans were produced on a 141-inch chassis. Limousine models were also offered on a special Custom Eight 148-inch-long chassis. Allegedly there



Clipper styling returned after the war in the form of the warmed-over 1946 Packard models. Here is the Custom Super Club sedan for \$2,913.



Packard continued manufacturing bare-bones taxicabs, such as this 1947 model, in the postwar era, even though it couldn't build nearly enough of its upscale luxury automobiles to meet demand.



Convertibles returned to the Packard line for the 1948 model year, offered in the Super Eight (120-inch wheelbase) and Custom Eight (127-inch wheelbase). This is a Super Eight model.

were some six-cylinder-powered cars built, using leftover engines from 1947, but these cars were for export only. Nonetheless, this would be the absolute last year for any Packard built with a straight-six engine.

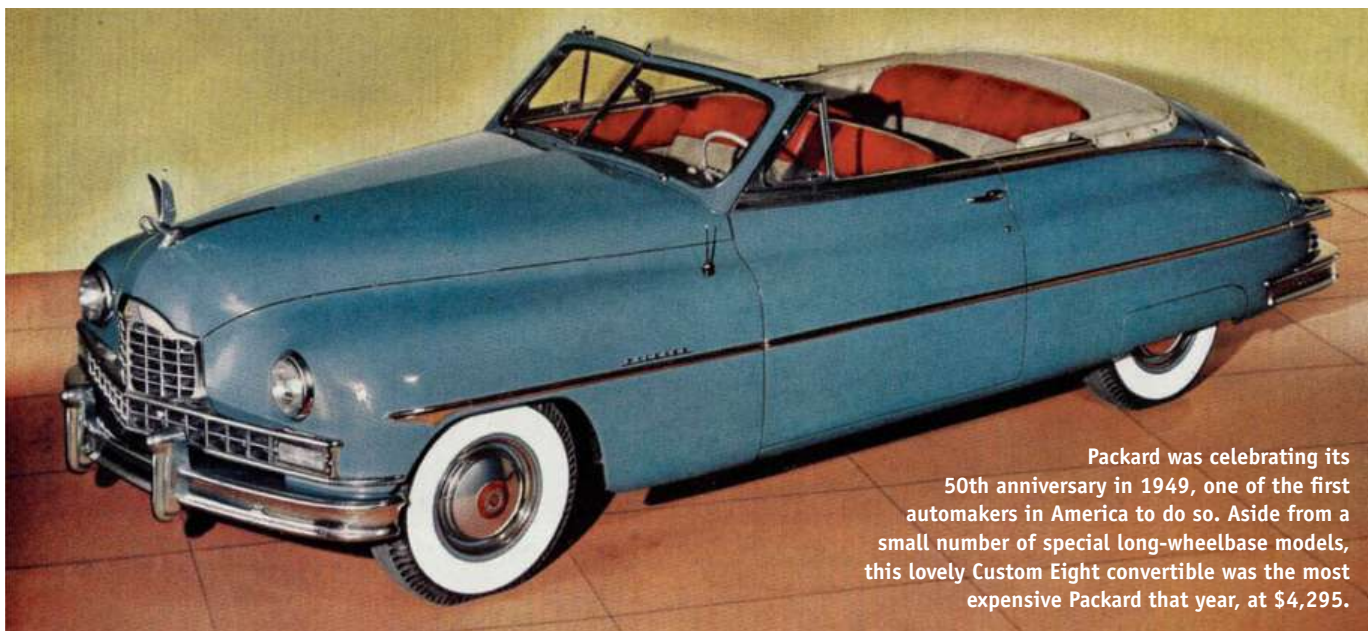
Styling elements for 1948 included a lower, rounded prow, straight-through fenders and a short grille that retained the ox-yoke style of prior Packards. Reaction to the new styling was mixed; some wags referring to the car as the "Pregnant Packard." The public, however, loved them,

and more than 80,000 examples were produced.

For the 1949 model year, the company offered two series. The first were essentially the 1948 "22nd Series" models carried over. Mid-1949 brought a second run of 1949 models, the 23rd Series, with a small number of changes. Models included the Eight, Deluxe Eight and Super Eight, and the top-line Custom Eight. To celebrate its 50th anniversary—one of the first American car companies to do

so—2,000 cars were offered in a special gold metallic color. The 23rd Series cars are identified by their "speed line" bolt-on chrome taillamps and unique spear side moldings on most models. Big news was an entirely new automatic transmission, called Ultramatic; standard on Custom models, optional on Super Deluxe.

So, Packard didn't have an all-new car to celebrate its big anniversary and wouldn't introduce one the following year either—the 1949 models carried over to



Packard was celebrating its 50th anniversary in 1949, one of the first automakers in America to do so. Aside from a small number of special long-wheelbase models, this lovely Custom Eight convertible was the most expensive Packard that year, at \$4,295.



Postwar Packard station wagons used steel bodies, with wood employed to form the wagons' rear section, as well as the side trim. This 1949 Packard Eight "station sedan" rode on a 120-inch wheelbase and had a list price of \$3,449. Note how squared-off the wood paneling was.



The company introduced all new cars for 1951. At the top of the line was this elegant Patrician 400 sedan. Priced at \$3,662 and riding a 127-inch wheelbase, a total of 9,001 were produced that year.



The Packard Convertible for 1951 was part of the 250 series, and thus rode on a shorter 122-inch wheelbase chassis. It also lacked the toothy grille and side scallops seen on the 400-series cars.

1950 with minimal changes. Management believed the postwar seller's market would last well into 1950, though it didn't. They paid the price for their mistake; Packard sales fell from 97,771 cars in calendar year 1949 to 73,155 cars in 1950, a drop of 24,616 units. Cadillac sales in that period rose by 20,945 units, as the GM division roared past Packard in the sales rankings.

Clearly, it was time to act. Chief stylist John Reinhart was assigned the task of coming up with the first all-new Packard

in 10 years. Reinhart created a design that was modern and clean-lined, but to some lacked the regal substance of earlier Packards. The new cars featured a modern envelope body, sleek and unpretentious, with a lower hood, cowl and roof line endowing it with a contemporary appearance.

With all new series nomenclature, the least-expensive Packards were the 200 series, two- and four-door sedans offered in standard and Deluxe trim, plus a business

coupe in standard trim, all on a 122-inch wheelbase. Prices started at \$2,416 for a Club Sedan, which placed it squarely in Buick Super territory. The most expensive model was the elegantly trimmed \$3,662 Patrician 400, a four-door sedan on a state-of-the-art 127-inch wheelbase. In between was the Packard 300, a plainer version of the Patrician 400 sedan also on a 127-inch chassis but priced at \$3,034, about the same as a Buick Roadmaster. For people looking for a sportier Packard, there was the 250 series:



One of Packard's better ideas for 1953 was the Formal Sedan, which was a Patrician specially trimmed by coachbuilder Derham. Priced at a lofty \$6,531, it helped re-establish Packard's exclusive, luxury image, which had faded over time. Note the sophisticated-looking vinyl-covered roof.



Another model that went a long way towards reinforcing Packard's luxury image was the fabulous Caribbean, a specially-built convertible with custom body styling. Only 750 Caribbean convertibles were produced for the 1953 model year, each priced at a fairly staggering \$5,210.



For 1954, Packard offered two-door hardtops in two series, the Clipper Panama and the Packard Pacific seen here. The Clipper hardtop could be bought for as little as \$3,125, while the Pacific was tagged at \$3,827. The more upscale Pacific had an engaging style about it.

the Mayfair hardtop coupe at \$3,234 and a sharp convertible on the 122-inch wheelbase for \$3,391. Packard no longer offered a long-wheelbase convertible.

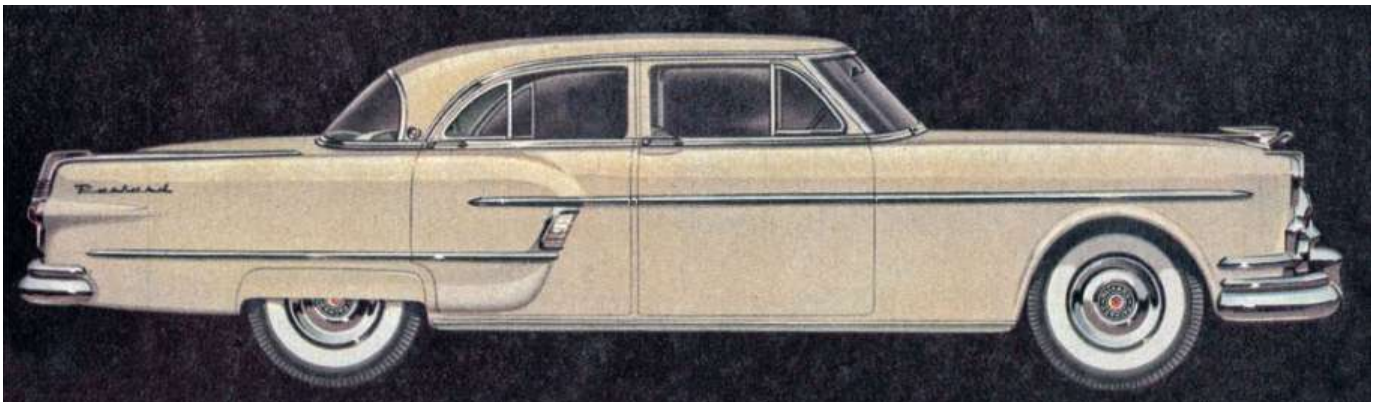
The problem with the 1951 Packard

was not that its styling was bad—actually it was very attractive, but when parked next to a 1951 Cadillac, the Packard seemed to have less “presence.” Reinhart went for a look of understated elegance when what

the public really wanted was flamboyance and size. Sales fell slightly for the year, no doubt due to Korean War restrictions.

The entire line carried over for 1952 essentially unchanged, except the business coupe was dropped because of low demand. Appearance-wise there were minor differences in exterior trim. Packard continued to refine its cars, making them quieter and ever more luxurious, but sold almost exactly the same number of 1952 models as it had the 1951 cars—69,921 examples for the 1952 model year.

In May, Packard got a new president, James Nance, formerly CEO of GE's Hotpoint Appliance division. He had no automotive experience, but was known as a top marketing person and was expected to turn sleepy Packard into a modern, dynamic corporation. Nance realized that Packard had fallen badly in luxury-car standings; indeed, the company was essentially a medium-priced car manufacturer, with a sideline of slow-



This artist illustration depicts the Packard Patrician for 1954. Sales were way down in 1954, thus only 2,760 Patricians were produced.

selling luxury cars. Since the end of World War II, Packard had effectively handed the luxury car business to Cadillac on a platter. Nance wanted it back.

To get it, he saw that the lower-priced Packards had to be separated from the luxury models. He began a slow process of divorcing the two by introducing the 1953 models, which again were mainly carry-over models, in two distinct series: Packard and Packard Clipper. The former 200 and 200 Deluxe became the Clipper and Clipper Deluxe, while the mid-range 250 was replaced by the Mayfair hardtop and Packard Convertible. The 300 model became the Packard Cavalier. The idea was that, over time, Clipper would become a separate make entirely.

Several models were added for the 1953 model year. A pseudo-hardtop Sportster two-door sedan was added to the base Clipper, while Patrician added a Formal sedan trimmed by Derham. Two professional cars debuted, the Corporation limousine and the Executive limousine; big, fine automobiles on a regal 149-inch wheelbase. A flashy custom convertible “sports car” called the Caribbean was also introduced. With a price tag of \$5,210, only 750 were built.

As a result of these changes, sales rose to just over 89,730 units for calendar 1953. They would have been much higher, but a sales war broke out between Ford and Chevrolet midway through the year, and it sucked in prospects that might otherwise have purchased Clippers. The battling intensified during 1954.

Packard was supposed to be completely restyled for 1954, but Nance decided to hold it off for a year—exactly why is still being debated—so for the 1954 model year, all buyers could see that was new were horned headlamp bezels, new taillamps on Clippers and a handful of other minor changes. This was not the year to be peddling carryover styling, and Packard sales were terrible. On October 1, 1954, the company merged with Studebaker with the idea of building future models on a common platform.

The 1955-model cars arrived late to market because Nance decided to transfer Packard and Clipper assembly into the new Connor Avenue body plant it bought from Briggs. Problems sprang up like weeds, and production ramp-up was agonizingly slow.

The new Packards were an extremely clever facelift by Dick Teague, head stylist since Reinhart left the company. The 1954 body shell and roof were retained, and all-new exterior body panels created to make the 1955 models look completely



The Caribbean was priced at \$6,100 for the 1954 model year and received some minor styling changes; note the eye-catching two-tone rear body area, the semi-enclosed rear wheels and the horns on the headlamp trim rings. Only 400 Caribbeans were produced this year.



For 1955, Packards and Clippers received a substantial restyling courtesy of Dick Teague. The look was flashier and more massive. Clippers were further separated from Packards via trim differences that included putting the name on the hood and fenders, with just a small Packard nameplate at the rear. A new “ship’s wheel” emblem was used prominently.



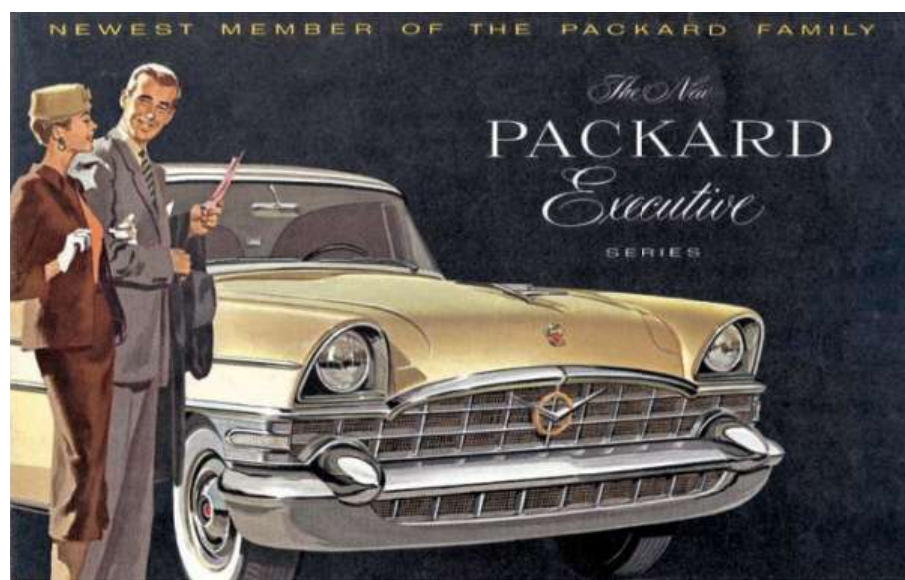
The 1955 Caribbean was powered by a mighty 275hp overhead-valve Packard V-8 with dual-quad carburetors. This model is the most sought-after of all the 1950s-era Packards.



For 1956, a stylish hardtop was added to the Caribbean line, with dual antennae and gaudy two-tone side trim. Priced at \$5,495, only 263 examples were produced before Packard production ended in Detroit. Nonetheless, it was an attractive car.



Like all 1956 Packards, the Caribbean received minor styling updates this year. This convertible was priced at \$5,995, making it the most expensive Packard this year. Overall, it had a very sporty demeanor about it, thanks to its hooded headlamps and rear wheel spats.



Mid-1956 saw the introduction of a new model to bridge the price gap between Packards and Clippers. The Packard Executive was essentially a Clipper Custom with a Packard-spec front end treatment, and was priced at \$3,465 for the sedan; \$3,560 for the hardtop.



The final year for the Detroit-built Packards was 1956, and they were as handsome and luxurious as ever. The Patrician sedan shown here, of which only 3,775 were built, was priced at \$4,160.

new and very stylish. Tall hooded fenders up front, gorgeous “cathedral” taillamps, and massive “Dagmar” bumpers combined to give the Packard line a bold new look of bigness. Packard and Clipper side trim was now dramatically different, as were taillamps and grilles. The new cars also boasted modern overhead-valve V-8 engines and a host of innovations including Torsion-Ride suspension and Twin Ultramatic transmission.

Customer response was excellent, and the new Packards should have sold much better than they did, but getting the new plant running smoothly proved difficult, and production crawled. Even then, product quality was the worst in Packard history, and the cars soon earned a poor reputation. The model run was nearly over by the time production was running at anything like a proper cadence. By then, sales had hit a brick wall.

The 1956 models introduced few styling changes; Packard headlamp hoods were extended, while Clippers retained their 1955 looks with only minimal change. Clipper officially became a separate make in 1956—about two years too late. A new Packard Executive debuted midyear, essentially a Clipper Custom with a Packard grille and trim. Priced at \$3,465 for a sedan, the Executive neatly straddled the spread between Clippers and Packards and was a smart marketing move that came too late to do much good. Less than 3,000 were produced. By that point Packard sales had utterly collapsed, as a wary public avoided an independent auto manufacturer that looked on the verge of going bust. Studebaker-Packard



Beginning with the 1957 model year, Packards were built in the Studebaker plant in South Bend, Indiana, and were based on the largest Studebaker car, the President. Dick Teague did as good a job as possible in making the President look like a Packard, but the result didn't fool many people. Sales tumbled further due to their conservative style, especially when compared to GM's and Chrysler's Forward Look models.

Corporation faced bankruptcy.

Salvation came when defense contractor Curtiss-Wright agreed to manage the company in return for the opportunity to purchase its defense factories and business. But as part of the deal, the Detroit plants were permanently shuttered; Packard would remain an automaker in name only. Cars bearing its name would be produced in Indiana on the Studebaker President platform.

The less said about the 1957 Packard, the better. Teague did a solid job creating a Packard out of a Studebaker, though they sold poorly. But at least the 1957 cars looked a little like a Packard. The 1958 models, on the other hand, were dreadful-looking things with tacked-on quad headlamps and plastic tailfins. By the end of the model year, the Packard brand was laid to rest, a sad end to one of America's most glorious names. 🐼



Studebaker-Packard produced this Packard Hawk personal luxury car for the 1958 model year, and these cars are surprisingly popular today. Power came from a 275hp, 289-cu.in. supercharged Studebaker V-8. Perhaps 1958's most distinctive looking automobile.



The final Packard sedan arrived for 1958 with altered trim and a new front end bearing quad headlamps. Priced at \$3,212, only 1,200 four-door sedans were built before Packard production was halted for good. You can clearly see the Studebaker hidden beneath the Packard trim.

Ray Evernham

NASCAR legend's insights on historic cars and TV



BY JIM DONNELLY • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JIM FLUHARTY

If you want to get into the collector-car hobby, there's no shortage of pathways you can follow. You can take an auto shop class to learn the basics of mechanical and cosmetic work, hook up with an experienced person who's willing to show you the ropes, or maybe just start messing with cars on your own, the trial-and-error way. Then there are guys like Ray Evernham, who's pivoted his life in some improbable ways to become an influential personality in the world of historic automobiles, both for competition and the street. When you look at how he got where he is today, you'll likely be amazed by the nature of his journey.

Ray is most recently well known as the host and producer of *AmeriCarna*, the program about locating and restoring historically significant automobiles that airs on the Velocity channel. There's more than that on his current resume, but at his core, Ray is a certified legend in American motorsports. Born 57 years ago in Hazlet, New Jersey, he eschewed most normal youthful activities and focused

his attention squarely on cars. He was a hugely accomplished short-track racer in a variety of open-wheel Modifieds until a savage crash at Flemington Fair Speedway in 1991 left him with head injuries. At that point, family members persuaded him to step away from the cockpit for good.

He moved to the International Race of Champions, the Roger Penske-owned series whose shops were near his home on the New Jersey shore. Hired as a chassis specialist, he advanced to crew chief for the entire team, and began working with a racing prodigy named Jeff Gordon. Ray rapidly built a reputation as a fanatic on organization and car prep. In the early 1990s, Gordon, then the hottest property in racing, moved south to NASCAR. Evernham went with him and at the behest of Ford, became Gordon's crew chief. Then, in a bombshell, Chevrolet signed the largely untested Gordon to a lifetime contract, and Gordon took Ray along with him to Hendrick Motorsports.

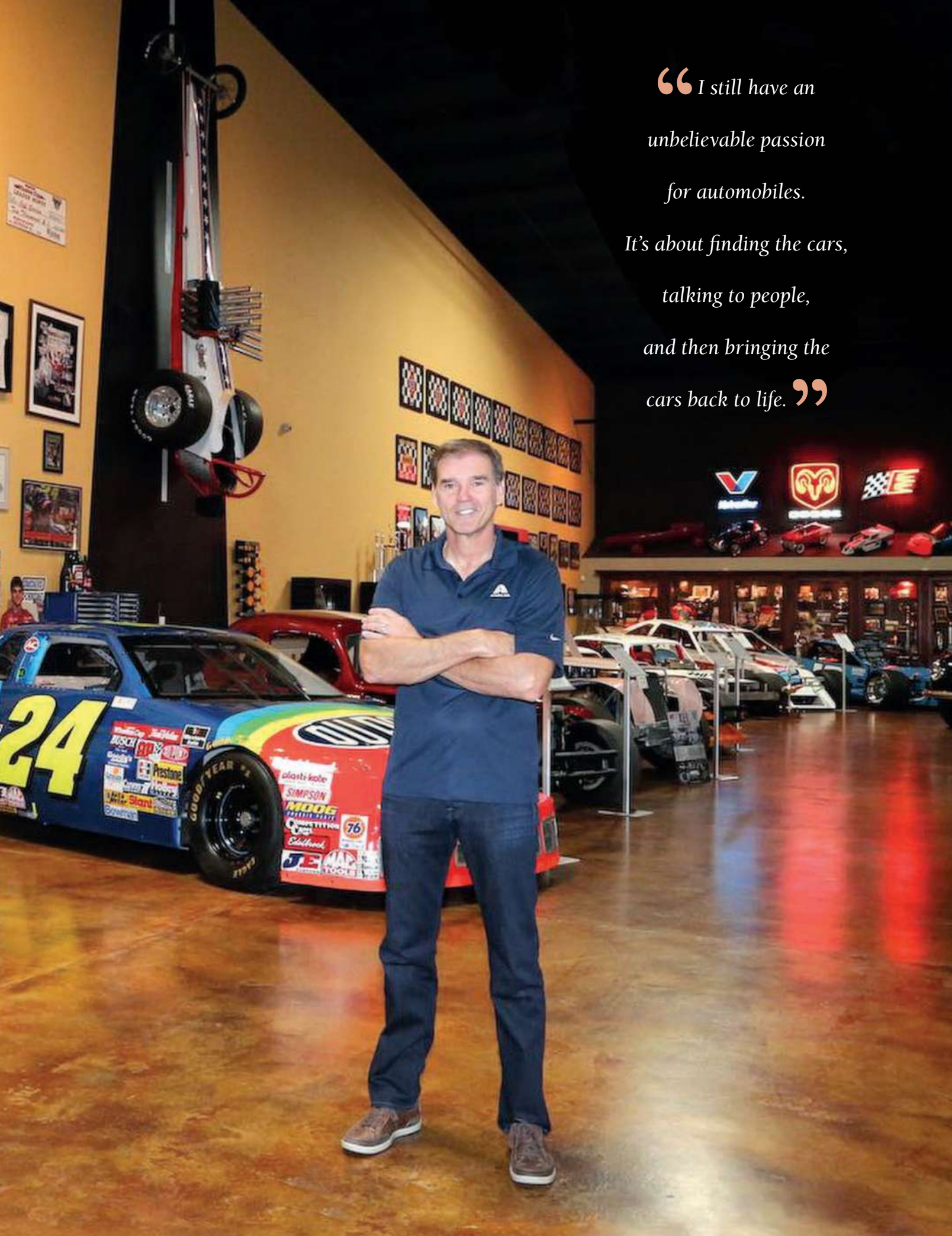
The rest, as they say, is history. Gordon and Ray immediately meshed and

captured a trio of NASCAR Winston Cup championships and a slew of major races, including the Daytona 500 and the inaugural Brickyard 400. When Dodge later re-entered NASCAR racing after a long absence, Ray's discipline and unquenchable work ethic positioned him ideally to lead the Pentastar charge. Things change, however. Today, he's a consultant to Hendrick Motorsports, a partner in a sports marketing firm, a TV host and sometime racing analyst. He's also got a shop in Mooresville, North Carolina, that's the ultimate toy box for people in our world. Ray made his reputation through racing, but he's been a total, committed car guy from day one.

"I've always had an interest in doing TV," he says. "Seeing people going from racing in broadcasting like Ned Jarrett, Buddy Baker and Benny Parsons break the ice; I also saw that they did a really good job. They opened the door for a lot of other people, including myself. In 2000, when I took a year off racing while I was putting the Dodge program together, I did some work with ABC and ESPN, and

“I still have an
unbelievable passion
for automobiles.

It's about finding the cars,
talking to people,
and then bringing the
cars back to life.”





Ray likes to pair up his muscle cars, as demonstrated by these Dodge Daytonas and elsewhere in the shop, a pair of 1969 Charger 500s. As a racer, he cut his teeth in Modifieds, running these two during the 1990s.

Velocity channel stood up and said, hey, I'll help you get this on the air. He pushed it. He had formerly worked with Speed channel, so he's been around."

Unlike some other forms of "reality" TV, *AmeriCarna* isn't scripted. "We go out and find these car stories, and we just shoot it, a whole bunch of stuff. Then we come back here and cut it up and tell the story," Ray says. "I wanted it to be like if me and you were friends, and I find this really cool car and its story, and I'm telling you about it. But now, I've got video and audio, so I can take you with me. But we don't know about half these things until we find them. So we shoot a lot of stuff. I can't say, let's go out and find a 1923 track roadster that ran in California and then just get a phone call. We go out, find the car, shoot the restoration and then the return to the track. The initial stories, we just grab the cameras and head out, and hope we don't get thrown out when we get there."

There's literally no place the crew won't go. One show that's in the can for next season involves a historic California dry lakes racer called the *Woody Lee T*, a Ford Model T that was first built in the 1940s. The car was featured in *Hot Rod* twice during the early 1950s. It ran with

I really enjoyed it. I did some work with Benny Parsons and Bob Jenkins, and I always thought I'd want to do more of it. Back in 2007, when I sold my company, I went back and did quite a bit of work for ESPN until I went back to work for Mr. Hendrick on the competition side. I thought the best thing was to get out of NASCAR (broadcasting), because if you're working on the competition side, that's a conflict of interest. I've just loved cars all my life. I love the history of the automobile, whether its race cars or regular cars, and I love the stories about how much cars connect with people. When I go to all these car shows, you meet people and hear their stories and you think, man, this

would be great to share with other people. That's how I got the idea for *AmeriCarna*."

The concept of *AmeriCarna* is simple to grasp. Each episode tracks a historic car through its discovery and restoration, with lots of anecdotal background on the car provided by the experts who know them. The car in question could be a land speed record car, a woodie used by California surfers, or an authentic moonshiner's car, among others. The program and production company are co-owned by Ray and Hendrick, the auto retailing magnate and powerhouse NASCAR team owner. As Ray lays out for us, "I just wanted somebody to believe in the concept. And then Bob Scanlon from the



the Cal-Neva Timing Association at meets on the dry lakebeds. The T was passed around among multiple owners, but was never changed from its original configuration, and then was put into storage for more than 30 years. When Ray heard about it, he bought the car personally, and then structured an *AmeriCarna* episode around the search for it. While doing research on it, the crew discovered that in 1950, the Woody Lee T had placed second in the very first edition of the Grand National Roadster Show, one of hot rodding's most prestigious events. Ray says, "We're going to put the car back together with some friends as it originally was. It ran 133 MPH in 1952 on the lakes, and we have the original timing slips. It's got a Mercury flathead in it. We're going to put it together and see if we can run that fast with it. The guy who's the leading race flathead builder in the world has the engine now."

Given Ray's background, it should surprise nobody that a lot of *AmeriCarna*'s stories have a performance theme. The production crew located the Clint Bawnner chassis that brought Mario Andretti his Indianapolis 500 start, first win and first championship during his astounding rookie year of 1965. The acclaimed Indy crew chief, Jim McGee, is heading the restoration effort in Indianapolis. The skills involved in restoring these cars translate directly from the disciplines of fabrication, welding and construction that are standard fare in any race shop.



Eclectic tastes in collecting see Ray's cars run the gamut from American performance to antique racing cars and even trucks. With his NASCAR experience, there's next to nothing that Ray can't fabricate in his shop.

"I don't know if you make the jump (from team leadership to car restoration), or it's just something that you want to do, and the timing in your life is right," Ray says. "There are very few people who can run their entire life at the pace that's needed to be a top racer. I've never put a half-effort into racing. Never have, never will. I've always said I would quit before I phoned it in. I don't work 17-hour days seven days a week anymore, but I still have an unbelievable passion for automobiles. And that passion, plus all the years of experience, carries over. It's not so much the welding and fabrication, or I can build this or that; it's about finding the cars, talking to people, and then bringing the cars back to life. We've actually located one of (NASCAR Hall of Fame driver) Wendell Scott's original race haulers, and Brad Daugherty (ex-NBA star and

NASCAR team owner) and I are going to restore it for the Scott family."

Ray's a collector, too. He's got a matched pair of Dodge Daytonas, and a similar set of Mercury Cyclone Spoilers, also from 1969, both the Cale Yarborough and Dan Gurney editions. "I've been fortunate enough to win races for Chevrolet, Dodge and Ford, so they're all represented. I have a really nice 1965 Chevelle SS that I drive. My wife (Erin Crocker Evernam, an engineering graduate who was the first woman to win a World of Outlaws feature in a Sprint car) has a 1967 Chevrolet Corvette 427, a beautiful side-pipe car. I also have a 1958 Chevrolet Impala that I'm in love with. I'm also into flatback Fords and Dodges, plus the NASCAR body styles. I've also got the original Ford Torino Talladega that belonged to Banjo Matthews and was built by Holman-Moody and a couple of Dodge Charger 500s and a couple of Plymouth Superbirds. I've also got a 1934 Ford coupe that has 21-stud Edmunds cylinder heads on it, which are extremely rare."

Ray also says, giving up a little of his preferences, "If I had a 1959 or 1960 Cadillac, I'd slam that baby right to the ground. I just appreciate all kinds of cars. Back in those years, cars were art in metal. The cars of the 1950s reflected what our lives were at that time. You can go through every generation of car, look at it, and know what was going on in America at that time." 🐾



A Deluxe Restoration

Radio days of yore led to a decades-long quest to acquire and restore a 1948 Dodge Deluxe Business Coupe—Part I

BY MATTHEW LITWIN • PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KOCH • RESTORATION PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CHRIS EVANS

More often than not, the car is taken for granted. It's a commuting tool, vacation hauler and grocery getter, even an impromptu landscaping transporter. A few years and 100,000 miles later, the car is hurriedly traded for a new model, and over the decades, you've lost interest in what you once held title to. Yet, we can all proudly say we'll always remember our first ride—new or used—with fondness.

Scottsdale, Arizona's Chris Evans can attest to that. Originally hailing from Middletown, New York, at age 14 Chris wanted nothing more than to possess his own car. He had saved his earnings as a golf caddy, and on one hot summer day, hitchhiked to Spinelli's salvage yard 15 miles outside of town where he found "the one."

"Against a barbed wire fence, surrounded by junk, was a 1948 Dodge Business Coupe. The tires were flat, a hornet's nest was inside and weeds were up to the windows; it didn't run and had no registration, but it didn't matter. I bought it for \$30," says Chris.

Purchasing was one thing; getting it home was another. The yard owner was kind enough to tow the Dodge, with Chris, home, only to face a displeased mother. In the end the Dodge sat in the backyard. "The only thing that worked was the radio," Chris remembers. "Over the next two

years, I spent countless hours sitting in it listening to the radio with friends until the battery died. Then we'd charge it up and resume listening. I felt like a king."

Decades later, the Dodge lingered in his mind, prompting Chris to begin searching for a replacement. The opportunity to capture part of his past came in 2007.

"I was at an auction in Atlantic City, New Jersey, and happened to spot a discrete note on a bulletin board offering a 1948 Dodge Business Coupe for sale in Downingtown, Pennsylvania," Chris tells us. "I called the seller, got some details and asked him to send photos. The car looked good, so I had it shipped to Scottsdale. I got butterflies all over again."

"Looking it over after delivery, it needed to be restored, but it was a good example to start with. There was some rust, but it wasn't terrible. It ran, but ran rough; and the interior needed to be replaced. The

irony here was that the radio didn't work.

"I planned to restore the Business Coupe myself, but I stored the Dodge for about a year while preparing to do so. When the time came, I popped the hood and found rat nests on top of the engine and in front of the radiator. After cleaning that up, I began to gut it, but once I realized how difficult and time consuming it was, I gave up, and that's when I called Charly Spencer from Charly's Garage in nearby Mesa. I subcontracted several parts for refinishing—the dash, engine, transmission and such—but Charly handled the rest, including reassembly."

In spite of an eager start and what appeared to be a solid foundation to work with, years of prior ownership has a tendency to hide hasty repairs. Let's accompany Chris on this two-part quest to resurrect a page from his past in this 1948 Dodge Business Coupe. 🐭



After sitting in post-purchase storage for a period of time, the car finally began to be restored in earnest with the removal of several key body panels, select trim and the front inner fender panels, each carefully laid out for evaluation and documentation.



Once the front body panels were unbolted from the Dodge, the removal of various parts that surrounded the engine began, including the radiator and some of the electrical wiring. Each wire and connector was carefully tagged for future reassembly.



Although it was functional, the Dodge's 230.2-cu.in. straight-six engine exhibited some corrosion, especially the water distribution tube (within the oval opening), a critical passage that maintains proper cooling. The L-head engine would need to be rebuilt.



Both the engine and three-speed manual transmission were removed, allowing easy access to the rest of the electrical and brake systems, as well as the front suspension. A thick layer of undercoating had preserved most of the frame and control arms.



Inside the cabin, the bench seat has already been removed, permitting greater work space to tackle the disassembly of the woodgrained instrument panel and the rest of the wiring harness. Fortunately, there was nary a trace of rodent infestation within.



Focus shifted to the disassembly of the rear portion of the brake system. To help make moving the Business Coupe easier during much of the remainder of the restoration, the differential, axles and rear suspension systems were left intact, yet were carefully evaluated.



Having come to terms with his own restoration abilities, Chris sent the project to Charly's Garage. Upon delivery, the Dodge continued to be disassembled by the staff. Note that the toeboard has already been removed by the time the doors began to receive attention.



It may seem surprising, however Dodge still used thick slabs of wood to separate the cavernous trunk from the coupe's spacious interior. As fortune would have it, neither piece had rot, although deep cracks would eventually force the replacement of one.



Although it was complete, the original cloth/leather interior showed water stains and other damage from decades of use. The upholstery, including the door panels, was retained in order to duplicate the colors and pattern when the time came later in the restoration.



After dismantling, the body was separated from the frame and subjected to media blasting. The process exposed original bare metal, small pockets of corrosion and previous attempts at repairs, such as this riveted patch along the trunk lip.



To prevent the body from flash-rusting, the bare metal was given a quick coat of protective self-etching primer. There were several other small pop-riveted patch panels exposed during media blasting, including the lower corner of the tail panel.



Considering the Dodge's eastern origins, the level of exposed corrosion seemed minimal; however, in typical fashion, the spare wheel well in the trunk floor would require careful patch work before moving forward with the project.



Shortly after the condition of the body was evaluated and the extent of its needs was determined, every surface was given a coat of epoxy primer to further ward off corrosion. Areas needing work, or that required consulting with a marque expert, were marked.



Manufacturers hid stitched body seams with lead, adding weight to the body and, over time, contributing to the discoloration of paint applied over the soft metal. A common step today is to eliminate as much of the lead as possible on the roof pillars.



Another leaded seam was exposed, this time covering the junction between the rear section and the main coupe cabin. The lead, in all cases, was carefully melted out in small sections to prevent the main panels from warping; the rest was ground out.



As the body began to receive its restoration treatment, the Dodge's frame was further stripped and carefully scrutinized. Against all odds, nary a spec of invasive corrosion was discovered compromising its structural integrity, a fact that made the restoration task easier.



To fill the void in the body seams after the lead was removed, strips of 18-gauge metal were MIG welded in place. This also served to reinforce the panel junctions. Here the welds have already been ground smooth using a rotary sander.



Chris managed several aspects of the restoration project. Both the front and rear bumpers and corresponding guards were removed and documented before being delivered to Kerr West Plating in Phoenix, Arizona, for proper refinishing.

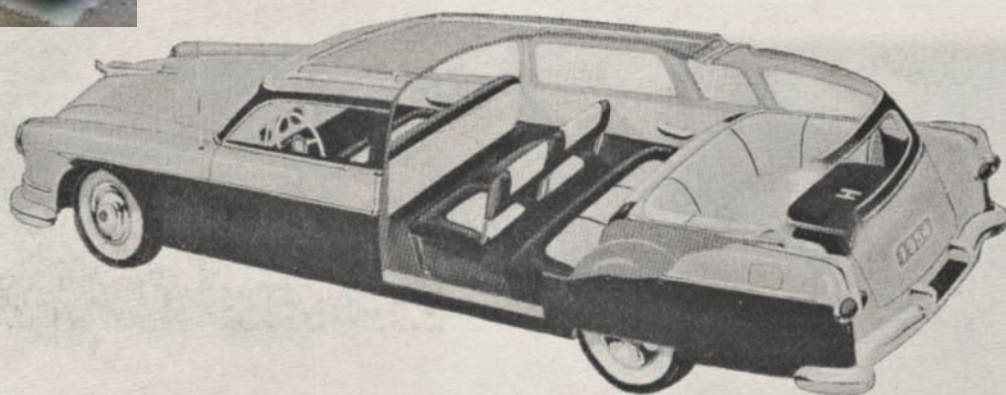
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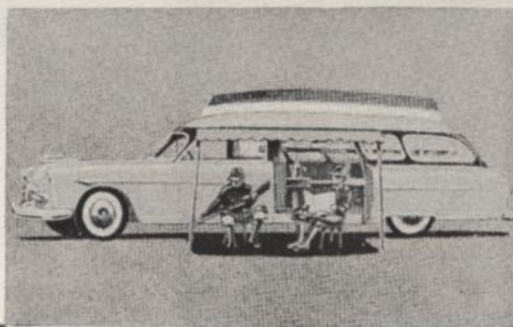
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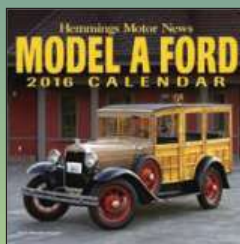


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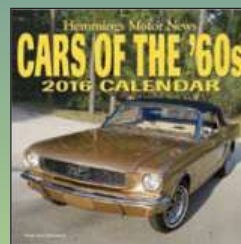
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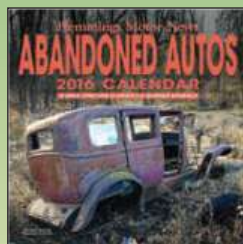
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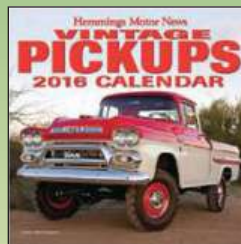
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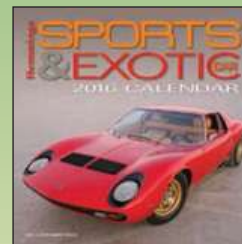
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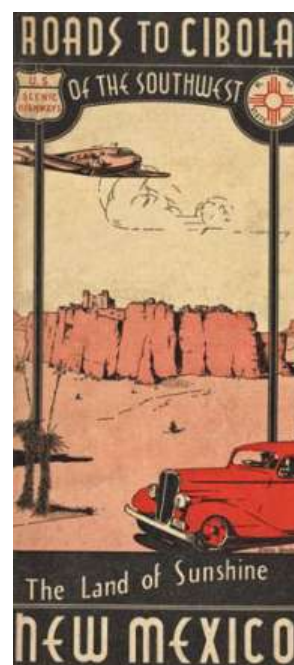
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Luring You In



IN THE UNITED STATES, DESTINATION motoring became quite popular in the late teens and 1920s. While Nelson Jackson was the first person to cross the continent by auto (in a Winton) in 1903, a transcontinental trip was still big news in 1915. At that time, there were still no interstate highways, few paved roads and even fewer reliable road maps and guides.

The *Automobile Blue Books* guided tourists in the early part of the century, but by the late 1920s traditional road maps became quite common. Road maps became so common, in fact, that it was difficult for a point of interest or special destination to stand out. To rise above the masses and catch a motorist's eye, hotel associations, motoring groups, companies and tourism bureaus started publishing road map look-alikes to lure you in to visit and spend your money. Soon, these destination maps, brochures and folders became just as ubiquitous as general road maps, but they served a purpose then and still do today.

The Mohawk Trail in Massachusetts starts in Orange and ends in Williamstown. It was opened in 1914 and became a top honeymoon destination by the 1920s. The 35-mile trail provided a gorgeous experience in the Berkshires, and featured canyons, overlooks and even a hairpin turn. A mid-1920s catalog measuring 11 X 8½ inches, highlights the features and history of the trail. Within the 30 pages, the catalog contains pictures of vehicles on the trail (mostly unpaved), a road map

and a listing of distances to major cities from the trail. The trail is described as "a marvel in engineering and construction" providing "beauty, splendor and grandeur" to the motoring tourist. A special center spread opens to show the panoramic view from the Westview Gift Shop, and it is captioned "America's Switzerland."

Traveling south and moving forward to 1934, we find a brochure for Florida's original Orange Blossom Trail. Today's OBT is known as a 7-mile strip of crime and ill repute, but the original trail stretched from Jennings in the north to Key West in the south. The trail was launched in 1934 and led motorists through Florida's agricultural section. The brochure states: "Lucky is the traveler who enters Florida over highway No. 41," for he will see "one of the nation's most naturally beautiful highways." It promises "no monotony for the motorist." In addition to the road map, the brochure includes photos of various recreational activities that visitors can enjoy, including fishing, hunting and boating. The brochure also lists each city that the motorist will pass through along the trail with comments on each. In 1934, Jennings was known as "the trucking section" of Hamilton County, and the University of Florida's population of just 16,000 could be found in Gainesville. In 1935, Orlando had never even heard of Walt Disney, but it did have a 23-mile scenic road that circled the city's 33 freshwater lakes.

Also from 1934, the state of New Mexico issued a fantastic booklet for motorists. Part road map and part tourism guide, the 72-page booklet shows a driver not only what to see in the Land of Sunshine but how to get there as well. It covers nearly every U.S. and state road within its boundaries. Maps are detailed, but the impatient driver would not be thrilled to read that "all important state roads in New Mexico are under maintenance." Four pages are dedicated to U.S. Highway 66, still fairly young in 1934. The booklet reports that Route 66 "hurries the motorist westward but gives many chances for pleasant stops at points of interest." The booklet concludes with a brief summary of motoring laws and a reassurance that the New Mexico Motor Patrol "is not an organization of swearing, snarling 'where the so-and-so do you think yer going,' but a specially trained, highly competent corps of men." If you did happen to violate a traffic law, the booklet states that "you will be courteously informed as to what the custom and law is and allowed to proceed."

These three brochures are just a tiny sample of motoring guides and brochures used to lure visitors and their wallets. You could still use them today to navigate the same roads, although the scenes, details, and free pass when breaking the law have probably changed quite a bit. I've just shared three of my favorite motoring brochures; tell us about yours! 🐾



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Late, But Light, Lincoln

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a “traditionally-sized” American luxury car, you bought a Lincoln Continental with all that road-hugging weight. Unfortunately, by 1979, the 400-cu.in. V-8 became the standard powerplant, and it could hardly move these large rolling living rooms down the road. I know firsthand because I owned a 1979 Lincoln. That car rode like a dream, handled very well, and it was the easiest car to park. I could see all four corners and squeeze it into some very tight spots. If I had a longer driveway, I would still own it.

Despite its hampered performance, the last of the extra-large Lincolns sold very well, especially the Collector's Series. Anyone in the market for a luxury car knew this was the last opportunity to buy anything like it. Fortunately for those in the old car hobby, the last huge Lincolns were babied by most owners and are easy to find in good condition today.

The 1970s Lincolns were beautifully styled. Although they eventually adopted the popular Rolls-Royce-like grilles, they maintained looks that were distinctly Lincolnesque and not too overdone.

In 1980, Ford really had no choice but to downsize due to the Federal Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards. That choked-up 400 engine with all those emissions controls, pulling more than 5,000 pounds of car, wasn't going to cut it for one more year.

Utilizing the Panther platform from the downsized 1979 Ford LTD and Mercury Marquis, the 1980 Lincoln Continental lost 1,000 pounds, 10 inches in wheelbase and 14 inches in length. Would you believe it was within a few hundred pounds of the Versailles? Talk about extreme makeovers. While all the downsizing specs were impressive, the biggest news was a larger interior. That goes to show you cars are like people; all that extra weight was just overhang.

Adding to the glamour was a new Lincoln Mark VI, which now included a four-door model with slightly different looks made obvious by oval opera windows. I won't mention the pie plates on the hidden headlamp doors that made an appearance in the 1980s.

The base engine was the 302-cu.in.



V-8, the smallest Lincoln engine since the 292-cu. in. Zephyr V-12. The biggest news was the new Ford Integral Overdrive Transmission, a four-speed automatic that was an industry first with a mechanically engaged overdrive fourth gear, and a third- and fourth-gear lock-up torque converter. Fuel economy increased by 38 percent, making it the most efficient luxury car on the market. Considering my 1979 Lincoln got 11 MPG, this newer Lincoln would obtain almost 14 MPG (these are my numbers, not official ones).

The Continental name was dropped for 1981, when “Town Car” was applied to the decklid. The Continental would return in 1982 on the Fox platform. I once attended a show where there were two 1982 Continentals, one of which won a trophy.

Sadly, the 1980 Lincolns experienced a 57 percent drop in sales. There were a few factors at play, including a recession. Personally, I think the styling and late arrival hurt sales. The new Lincolns were definitely lighter, smaller and more efficient, but the upright grilles, blade fender lines, lighted tiara roof bands, and opera windows managed to make them look like slightly over-decorated 1970s throwbacks.

Cadillac hit the nail on the head when it downsized with more clean, uncluttered, evolutionary styling that maintained a traditional Cadillac look.

American luxury car buyers were also beginning to shy away from padded vinyl and opera windows. The trend was leaning more toward understated luxury, as luxury car owners began to embrace high-end Eu-



ropean saloons, with their minimal chrome and black accents.

In less than a decade's time, with cleaned up styling, the Lincoln Town Car would find its niche as the preferred car to chauffeur celebrities from their hotels to the gala. “Town Car” became the vernacular for a chauffeured limousine.

“How are you getting to the airport?”

“I reserved a Town Car.”

The big Lincolns would go through a few transitions until they were discontinued just a couple of years ago—a move that surprised many. As a friend of mine says, “Anna Wintour wants to be picked up in a Town Car, not an SUV.” Maybe that cool new Continental they are planning will include a stretched Town Car edition.

So, why should you buy an early 1980s Lincoln Continental or Town Car? Here is the perfect way to enter the hobby in a luxury car. They are large and ostentatious enough to be noticed when you pull up to the entrance and hand your keys to the valet. You can find one of these early '80s Lincolns for a reasonable price; I've seen many decent low-mileage examples. However, the rare four-door Lincoln Mark V does command a premium. Best of all, you can use these Lincolns as a daily driver.

I believe everyone should own at least one Lincoln in their lifetime. 🐶



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George Schuster

AS FAR AS WE CAN TELL THROUGH the records, George Schuster won only a single automobile race during his lifetime, but he certainly made that victory one for the ages. When the United States was still transitioning from its frontier past to become a unified society, he turned a seemingly impossible publicity stunt into one of the most stunning achievements in early-day motoring. It wasn't supposed to work out that way, but Schuster became the driver of the Thomas Flyer that won the incredible New York-to-Paris race of 1908. The record he set in doing so still stands today.

George Schuster was born in 1873 in Buffalo, New York, which would later become a serious center for auto manufacturing. He was physically fit, with great endurance, having taken part in numerous long-distance bicycle races and worked in a cycle shop before finding employment with E.R. Thomas in Buffalo, which was just getting into the car business. At first, he assembled Thomas radiators. Next, he was elevated to mechanic. And in a promotion that led him ultimately to the finish line in Paris, he was named Thomas's chief test driver, delivering new cars to

their owners, teaching them how to drive and participating in several Glidden Tours.

To recap what happened next, Thomas had decided to participate as the American entry in the New York-to-Paris race, which was being promoted by *The New York Times* and *Le Matin*, a Paris daily. The original team leader was Montague Roberts, a rising star in auto racing and Thomas factory driver, who had participated in early Vanderbilt Cup action. Schuster, on the other hand, didn't join the team until a day before the start, taking a train south to meet the crew in Times Square, one of whom was a *Times* correspondent.

The race got underway as a blizzard was whipping the Northeast. Outside New York City, the roads ended. Mules pulled the Thomas to Buffalo along the Erie Canal towpath.

This torment set the stage for the race as a whole. Strapped with his own .32-caliber revolver, Schuster was resilient, having taught himself celestial navigation. He plotted the car's course using a sextant—maps were nonexistent, and there would have been no roads in the West for them to show in any case.

Roberts ultimately departed the team when it reached Cheyenne, Wyoming, to pursue other racing assignments. As his European competitors fell by the wayside during the constant pounding, Schuster guided the huge Thomas across the Bering Strait by ship, then overland through Eurasia. When the race concluded in Paris after 169 harrowing days, Schuster was the only remaining Thomas crew member who had covered the entire distance from New York. As we said, his record time still stands. So does his status as the first known American motorist to have crossed the United States in winter.

Schuster remained with Thomas until it went out of business in 1914, then joined crosstown rival Pierce-Arrow, reprising his old role of delivering its new vehicles, mainly trucks, to customers in various countries. When William Harrah acquired the remains of the winning Thomas in the 1960s, Schuster authenticated it, recognizing a cracked frame that he fixed with a piece of steel plating scavenged from a Russian steam locomotive, and took part in its restoration.

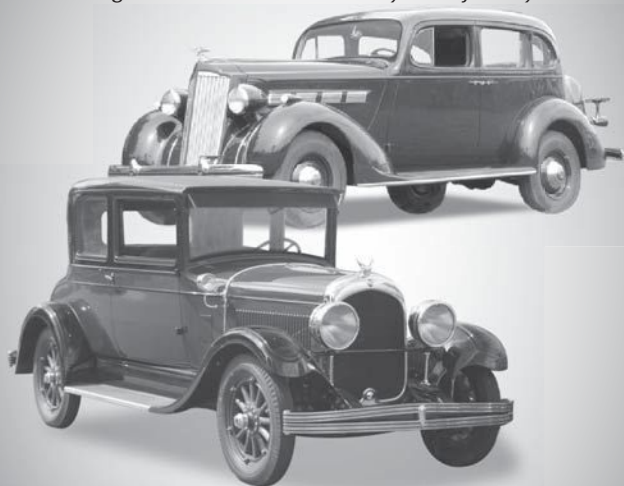
He then retired to Springville, New York, where he died in 1972 at age 99. 🐾



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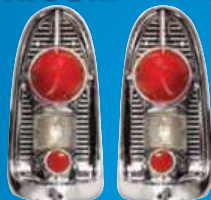
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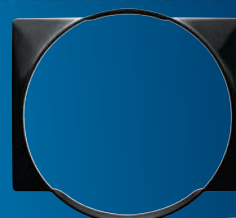
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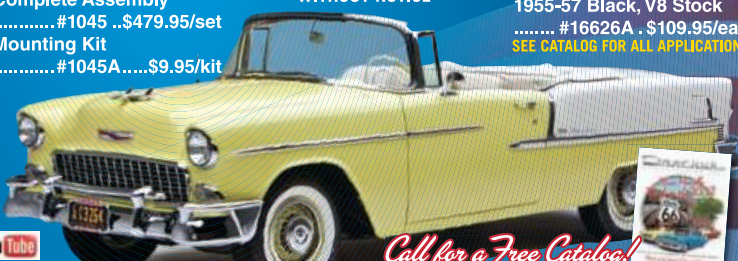


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John Klunder

"Lugger"

Doehler-Jarvis. 1967

"KLUNDER, REPORT TO THE STATION," came the call over the plant intercom system. Upon arrival at the station (an office inside the plant), my boss, Big Al, said, "I want you to lug for Potter on the shotgun line." A few hours later I was reassigned to the "horse collar" line. And so it went all summer long. As a summer vacation sub, each day I was assigned to different production lines to work. I was never assigned to produce the actual product, but was a support cog called a "lugger." My job was to see that each assigned production line had the supplies needed to produce. I carried the boxes, crates and tubs loaded with materials for others to assemble. And so it went all summer long as I worked the swing shift (3 to 11 p.m.) at the Doehler-Jarvis plant in Grand Rapids, Michigan, during the summer of 1967.

Doehler-Jarvis was an automobile supplier. Most of D-J's products began as zinc castings. Gigantic casting machines poured superheated liquid zinc into molds that would eventually morph into automobile parts. These parts came out of the casting machine and entered trim presses. These presses were one to two stories high; each had an upper and lower die the exact size of the zinc casting. Upon activation, the top portion came down with a thunderous thud that shook the floor of the plant, thus trimming excess zinc off the molded product. (Unfortunately, fingers, hands and arms at times got trimmed, as this was a dangerous job.) Our plant had six casting machines, and behind each casting machine was a press, so six presses thundered on each evening for 7½ hours, shaking the plant floor each time they trimmed. It was a constant earth tremor.

When a casting left the casting/trim press area, it had two places it could go. One area was an assembly line and the other was the planting area.

"Tubs" were headlamp and taillamp housings. They were conveyed to their assembly lines, where bulbs, seals and lenses were attached. They were then boxed and sent to shipping.

The same was true of "shutters." These were thin strips of zinc casting that went to the assembly area and miraculously turned into vents for automobile air conditioning units. I say miraculously,



because those thin strips of zinc were set into a jig in a specific pattern, and tiny screws were used to hold them together. That assembly was tedious and intricate.

The castings that didn't go directly to assembly had a great adventure awaiting them: plating. To plate zinc, the casting first was put onto a specially designed rack, which then lifted onto a conveyor belt that carried the casting into a four-step process. This belt would lower the casting into large vats, raise it up and on into another vat until the plating was concluded.

The first step was to clean the casting in a dangerous heated caustic solution. After cleaning, the casting was copper-coated, then nickel-coated, and finally chrome-coated. Think of the copper as undercoating, the nickel as the shiny color, and the chrome as the "clear" top protector. The color "chrome" is really nickel and the chrome is laid over the nickel to protect the nickel color.

Following the plating process, the casting would then go to the buffing operation. Each piece was hand-buffed on large 12-inch soft spinning wheels until it became shiny and bright as we see the parts on our cars. After this buffing process, it was off to shipping.

If you will recall, Big Al had assigned me to the shotgun and later to the horse collar line. Doehler-Jarvis did a lot of work for Chrysler Corporation. The shotgun was the support for the vent windows on the front doors. On the cars, we only saw the triangular area that supported the vent windows, but the triangle had an extension that went down about 14 inches into the door and bolted to the door as support for the vent windows. Since the triangle looked like the gunstock and the support the barrel of the

gun, it was termed "shotgun."

The other part was the horse collar. In 1967, a Dodge model—I think it was the Monaco—had a taillamp assembly that was about 10 inches long. There was a chrome-plated surround that was oval, with one end narrower than the other, looking like a horse collar, hence its name. Each part at the plant had a nickname.

One of the ironies of working in a piecework plant was the time-study game. Each operation of a worker is timed by a time-study engineer, and then the job is rated. If a worker meets his rate, then he gets a bonus. I watched this dance with wonder. For example, if the engineer was studying a buffer, the buffer would carefully take his time and buff out the part. The engineer would then set the rate. In reality, after the job was rated, the buffer would hurriedly buff out the part and then goof off for a portion of every hour. This occurred in every piecework job. It seemed to me that if that worker would buff more products per hour, cars would be cheaper. Or, if he really took the time he was rated for, the part would have been a more quality product. But, that was the system.

For a guy who was a gearhead and loved any type of machinery, that summer working at Doehler-Jarvis in that hot, dirty, and dangerous plant was just great. To this day, whenever I see a vent window assembly on an old car, I think back to that summer. 🍷



I Was There relates your stories from working for the carmakers, whether it was at the drawing board, on the assembly line or anywhere in between. To submit your stories, email us at editorial@hemmings.com or write to us at **I Was There**, c/o Hemmings Classic Car, 222 Main Street, Bennington, Vermont 05201.

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FLATHEAD FLAIR

Q: I know that a couple of manufacturers used McCulloch/Paxton superchargers on Continental engines to give them what help they could. But I don't think I've ever seen hotter cams, multiple-carb manifolds, or even exhaust headers for those sturdy old engines. Did anybody make high-performance parts for those engines? Or did I just miss them in perusing 60-plus years of JC Whitney catalogs? Toly Arutunoff
Tulsa, Oklahoma

A: Edmunds made dual-carburetor manifolds and aluminum cylinder heads for Continental straight-six engines, but those parts would probably take some searching to find today. A custom camshaft grind would also be a possibility. I'm afraid beyond that, I'm not aware of any Continental-specific bolt-on hop-up parts for the L-heads.

SLOW-STARTING De VILLE

Q: When we were in Chicago in 1980, we bought a 1977 Cadillac Coupe De Ville with fuel injection. The salesman said if there was gas in the tank and it had a good battery that it will start.

We would store the car covered up on Thanksgiving weekend and take the car out on the first week in April. We would start the engine in February or March and it would fire as soon as you turned the key, first try, like a champ.

Down here in Florida, we bought a 1997 Cadillac De Ville in 2000 with no problems. However, since my wife cannot drive anymore, we put on less than 100 miles per year. If I don't start the engine once a week, it will take many tries before it will start. Then we can go anywhere and it's like new. Do you have any suggestions or comments?

Alan Hartmann
Orange Park, Florida

A: Given the age of your car, it's possible that the system isn't holding pressure for extended periods, and the fuel pump is struggling to deliver fuel to the engine at initial startup. Try just turning the key on and pausing for a few seconds before cranking the engine. If that helps, it might be time to have the car's initial and running fuel pressures checked.

It's also possible that retirement in

Florida is making your battery lazy, and it's not turning the engine over quickly enough to start immediately. Though we tend to think of winter as the time for battery failures, hot weather can accelerate internal corrosion and cause the water to evaporate out of the fluid. Often a battery is damaged by heat then fails in the winter when it needs extra oomph to crank over a stubborn engine. Batteries that aren't being used can discharge more rapidly in warm weather than in cold weather. An unused battery exposed to 90 degree temperatures for instance, can discharge twice as fast as a battery stored at room temperature. A load test on the battery after the car hasn't been started for a few weeks would tell the story. If it fails, you could just make sure that you start and run the car more frequently (until the battery is completely spent), or disconnect the negative terminal if it's going to be sitting unused. A smart trickle charger might also help.

OLDS OFFSET

Q: Why did GM offset the engine on the 1969 Oldsmobile Cutlass S? Most people don't believe me when I tell them that Summit Racing's paperwork told me it came made special from the factory that way. The engine sets 1 inch over on the passenger side and 1 forward. Can you tell me why?

Fred Caldwell Jr.
New Philadelphia, Ohio

A: If you're referring to what I think you're referring to, this issue comes up usually when shopping for exhaust headers and exhaust systems to fit 1968-'72 Oldsmobile Cutlasses and finding an asterisk in the catalog saying that the system won't fit certain Cutlass models due to an engine offset.

This is a long-standing inaccuracy that has never been corrected in many catalogs. There were no differences in engine mounting among the cars in the Cutlass line that would affect exhaust component fit.

LEAKING POWERGLIDE

Q: I just finished reading *HCC* #131; as always it was another great issue. In *Tech Talk*, Robert Hamilton from Troy, New York, asked how to keep his Powerglide transmission from leaking, but got about half the answer. Your answer goes into the most common cause of these transmis-

sions—a burping problem. I know as it took me five years to figure out why my 1957 Nomad was leaking large amounts of transmission fluid onto the garage floor. Driving your car more is one answer, but this does not totally resolve the issue.

When the Powerglide was developed, the engineers did not expect anyone to keep their cars more than two or three years, so during this brief ownership, the cars equipped with Powerglide transmissions did not have these issues—they were used every day and did not sit around like they do now, waiting for us to drive them occasionally. The fact is that the engineers missed a very important aspect when designing the Powerglide transmission, but did not realize it until the 1958 models. After studying transmission failures in the earlier models, engineers realized that earlier Powerglides might've benefitted from a vent to let the transmission breathe. Ever since I had a transmission shop put a vent on top of the tailshaft of my Powerglide transmission, there has been no more transmission oil on my shop floor. Also, you can go to any auto parts store and buy a tracer dye for transmissions and engines and you can actually see where the source of your leak is. Put about a half bottle of dye into the engine and transmission fill areas, run your car for about five miles and park your car back in your work area and look around under the car with a black light, then you will actually see where your leak is. I thought for years the oil was coming from the rear main seal of the engine, but it was actually my transmission and oil drain plug.

Ralph Catalano
Schenectady, New York

A: I'm glad that you were able to stop your Powerglide from leaking, and thank you for the information. Driving the car more frequently was only part of the solution I offered. The other was an inspection of the pump seal or the converter seal, because Mr. Hamilton said the leaking seemed to be coming from the front of the transmission. I believe many Powerglide leaks are caused by internal seal failures or wear in the sealing surfaces resulting in fluid from the converter overflowing the pan. 🐼

Send questions to: Tech Talk, c/o Hemmings Classic Car, P.O. Box 196, Bennington, Vermont 05201; or email your question to: mmcnessor@hemmings.com.

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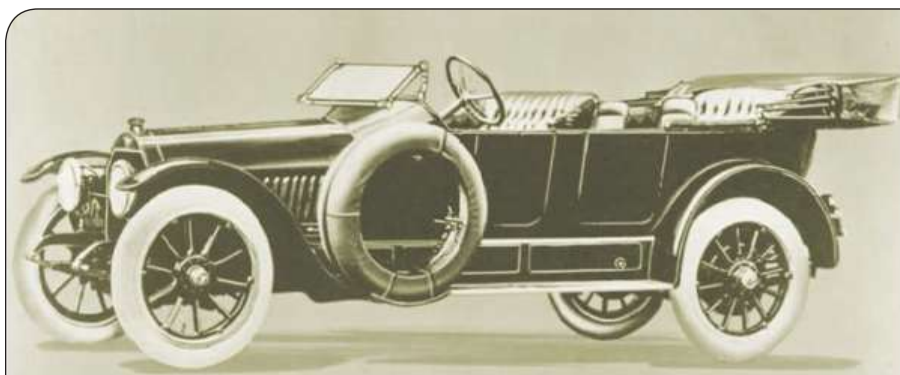
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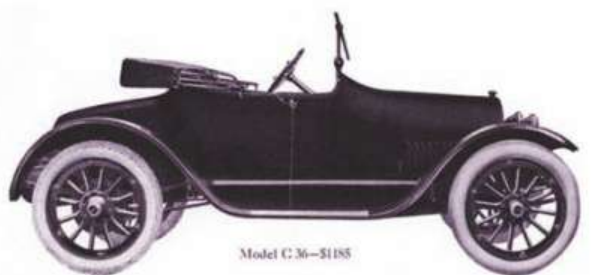
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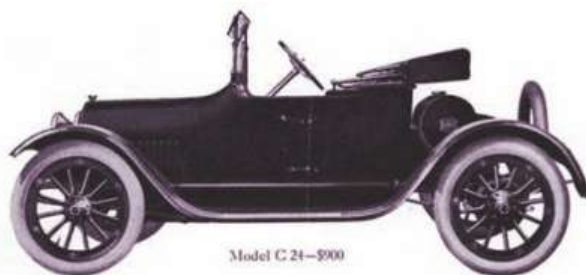


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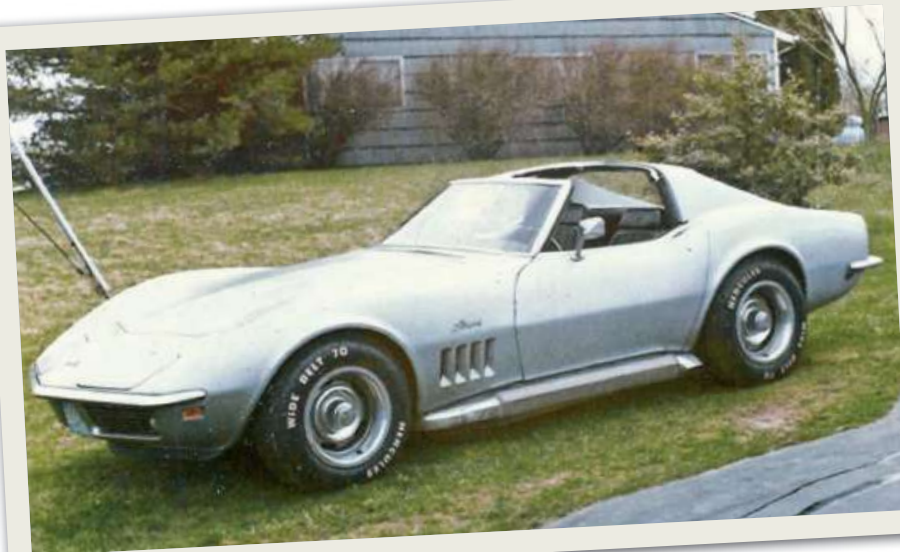
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Ten-Year Itch



I LOVED CORVETTES. IN THE LATE 1960s and early '70s as a young man growing up in Grand Forks, North Dakota, I had a "Corvette Itch." I would look at the ads and sometimes call the numbers of Corvettes for sale just to talk about them. Even if I couldn't afford one, I could still dream.

I bought Corvette books and signed up for GM's *Corvette News* magazine. I went to swap meets and bought old Corvette showroom brochures. I had the itch bad. It was tough on my mother. She wasn't crazy about the idea of her teen-aged son cruising in an "Arrest Me Red" sports car. It got so bad that a couple of times I would open the classifieds only to find holes where my mother had "edited" the newspaper. All the used car lots were checked out at least weekly, and it was surely noted when a Corvette was on the lot. I still think about some of the deals I could have gotten back in those days.

By the late '70s, I was living in New Jersey. Then I saw an ad in a local shopper. A guy had two Corvettes for sale, a '69 and a '73 model. They weren't far from my home, so I had to check them out. Both cars were silver and about the same price. The '73 was in nicer shape, but it was a bit more gentrified with A/C and an automatic. While the A/C would have been okay, the automatic took it out of the running. The '69 Corvette screamed performance. It didn't have many options—no

power steering, no power brakes, certainly no A/C, but it did have a four-speed and a 350-cu.in., 350hp engine. It was in original condition with matching numbers, and even had the ignition shielding in place. Originally, it had the standard exhaust out back—you could still see the outlet holes in the rear pan—but someone had put factory side pipes on it. And they were loud. With the lumpy idle from the 350hp cam, it sounded wonderful. This was the one for me! Soon I was cruising home with my own Corvette.

This Corvette was optioned kind of strangely—high-performance engine with performance cam combined with high-speed rear end and close-ratio four-speed. This combination resulted in not so much low-end grunt, the kind that shreds the tires, but wow, when it got rolling, it wanted to fly!

When it was new, I'm sure it would have easily registered well into the triple digits on the speedometer. Thankfully, I wasn't dumb enough to try a top-speed run on the busy New Jersey highways. The music that emanated from the burned-out side pipes was a symphony to a performance-car lover's ears, although the state didn't have the same appreciation that I had for that mechanical music.

New Jersey had yearly car inspections for older cars. In those days, you had to take your car to a state inspection center to have it safety-checked as well as

pollution checked. I knew my pipes were pretty loud, so I was apprehensive about inspection time.

I worked with a guy who had been a hot rodder back in the late '50s, and he said back then they would get their loud cars through state inspection by waiting outside the inspection center until a dump truck or other big truck would come in, and then they would go right behind it. The truck made so much noise in the station that their car sounded quiet. A good idea, but that method was outdated by the late '70s because big trucks weren't inspected in the stations anymore. So I came up with a plan—I would go to an outdoor station instead of an indoor station with its echoing walls. I wouldn't gun the engine, and I would try to glide up to the station at idle. It was worth a try.

When I drove up to the inspector and he looked at me and covered his ears, I thought my plan had failed. But I had come to the right station! "Have you ever been stopped for loud pipes?" he asked as my Corvette thumpity-thumped up to him. "No," I replied. "I don't drive it that often, just weekends and for fun." He then stated, "Well, when you get stopped, note, I say *when* you get stopped, not *if* you get stopped, tell the officer that the inspector told you to ask him where is your equipment that says this car is too loud?" In his personal protest against the state, this inspector passed my loud pipes.

Although my Corvette passed the safety inspection, it didn't pass the pollution inspection. It was a real hassle to get it to pass, as the air pump and other pollution-control items had been removed. The car was also getting tired—it needed front end work and just overall refurbishing. I didn't want to spend the money on it, so when the next year's inspection time came, I put the car up for sale. My Corvette itch had been relieved. As I listened to the beautiful engine music as its new owner drove off, I almost regretted my decision. Occasionally, I feel a twinge when attending a car show or looking in the pages of *Hemmings Motor News*, but I also note the cost to cure the itch has gone up tremendously. I guess I can live with an occasional itch now and then. 🐞

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Special ED

From 1938 to 1944, Mack produced one of the best heavy-duty light haulers ever created



BY MIKE McNESSOR • PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL STROHL

Mack's brief forays into light trucks are memorable mostly because they represent such a departure from the company's stock in trade: big, heavy-duty trucks for construction, over-the-road hauling, refuse collection, fire fighting and more.

The light truck most people associate with Mack is the 1936-'38 Mack Jr., which wasn't built by Mack at all, but by REO. Less commonly recognized is the heavyweight, light-truck featured here, the Mack ED, which the company manufactured from 1938-1944.

The ED, which superseded the Mack Jr. and also turned out

to be the company's last downsized hauler, is a relatively rare find today; just 2,686 were built prior to WWII. The ED didn't return to Mack's lineup after the war, as the company turned its focus, very successfully, to the heavy truck market.

Mack brothers John ("Jack") and Augustus ("Gus") started out in Brooklyn, New York, building horse-drawn wagons and



This 1942 Mack ED is powered by its original Mack EN11, gasoline six-cylinder engine, which was built by Continental. The transmission is the optional non-synchronized four speed. Note the use of spokes and split rims—the ED was far beefier than light trucks from Detroit.



carriages in the 1890s. By 1900, joined by brother William, the Macks had built a chain-driven, 40-hp sightseeing bus capable of ferrying 20 passengers around Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

The bus-building business took off for the Mack brothers, and soon they were manufacturing a line of commercial vehicles, including big, open-cab operator-over-engine trucks, under the Manhattan name. In 1905, the Mack brothers moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania, and established the Mack Brothers Motor Car Company. There, they continued to build buses, but delivery trucks, based on the same chassis, began to creep more steadily into their business. They also branched out into manufacturing railroad locomotives as well as forward-cab passenger cars that ran along the rails.

By 1910, when the fifth Mack brother, Charles, joined the company, Mack had replaced the Manhattan brand name with Mack, and the truck manufacturer's workforce had grown to more than 800 people with a production of 600 commercial vehicles annually. In 1911, Mack merged with Saurer Motor Company, to form International Motor Company, then that firm merged with Hewitt. This brought about the Mack



brothers' departure from the company (only William remained on board until the 1920s) but it also brought about, in 1914, one of the most significant trucks in the company's history, the Mack AB.

The AB line, which included 1-, 1.5- and 2-ton capacity haulers, helped boost the company's output to 51,000 trucks in its first year of production. The AB was powered by a 30-hp four-cylinder and marked Mack's early use of worm drive

rather than chain drive.

In 1916, the AC—the truck that earned Mack the now-famous “bulldog” nickname—rumbled slowly onto the scene in heavy-duty 3.5-, 5- and 7.5-ton flavors. The British ordered about 150 of these chain-drive heavies for use on the battlefield and began calling them bulldogs in part because of the trucks' toughness and in part because of their blunt-looking hoods. The U.S. Army relied on the AC bulldog, too, during WWI, cementing the truck's as well as Mack's reputation for toughness.

All told, some 40,200 ACs were built by the time the series was phased out in 1938 and, today, it remains one of Mack's most widely recognized trucks with its distinctive hood and C-shaped cab opening. Mack followed up the success of the AC with the similarly styled heavy-duty AK, as well as medium-duty rigs like the 1.5-ton BB with a modern-style hypoid gear axle.



These medium-duty trucks became brisk sellers for Mack, though the company continued to build everything from buses to giant rock trucks with 14-yard dump bodies used during the construction of Hoover Dam.

Perhaps that success in lighter delivery vehicles is what led Mack to dip its toe into the competitive light-truck arena, crowded by the likes of Ford, Chevrolet, Dodge, International, etc., and introduce the Mack Jr. The Mack Jr. lineup included a ½-ton pickup, a panel truck and a cabover—eight models in all, ranging from ½-ton to three tons. The trucks sold well in 1936 but couldn't repeat their success in 1937 and '38. Though Mack's reputation as a truck maker was unparalleled in the U.S. at the time, most buyers probably couldn't justify the \$100 premium Mack was charging for its pickup over a Ford.

For 1938, Mack introduced its own light-duty hauler, the ED. Though it bore some resemblance to the REO-built Mack Jr. this truck was a Mack, other than its "Mack" EN11 engine which was built by Continental. The ED looked like a heavy truck, shrunk down, with its tall cab and beefy cast spokes with truck rims. It was offered in 120.5- or 136.5-

inch wheelbases and rated at 1.5-2 tons. The ED was actually the smallest of the E-series, which continued in production after WWII, though the ED was discontinued in 1944. The truck's short production run and the fact that Mack found few takers for this heavy-duty light hauler make them a rare find today.

Mack collector Skip McKean of Henniker, New Hampshire, who has been in the bulk petroleum transport and home fuel delivery business for 52 years, spotted this 1942 ED at a truck show more than a decade ago and purchased it. The baby Mack had been partially restored and was in solid condition, but Skip immediately sent the ED off to the paint shop to get its red-and-green finish stripped off and replaced with his company's yellow, red and white livery and lettering. The utility body was scratch built by a local fabricator and loaded with vintage propane bottles, giving the truck the look of a light delivery rig that might've served double duty for maintenance work.

The truck is a regular at truck shows around the region and made the 100-plus mile trek from New Hampshire, along with Skip's other vintage Macks, to Hemmings headquarters in Bennington, Vermont, last summer. 🐾



When this ED was purchased more than a decade ago, it was wearing a more conventional pickup bed, but the owner had this steel utility body fabricated and outfitted with vintage LPG/propane bottles as if it were on its way to make a home delivery. It has a solid-looking stance.

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Snapshots of Toronto trucking, from a most unlikely place



BY JIM DONNELLY • IMAGES COURTESY WES EBBS

We'll say it again: You never know how, or where, you can turn up a treasure in our little world. Just as an example, we got an email from Wes Ebbs, who offered to share with us some truck photographs he had found. We looked the photos over and loved them. Then we found out where they came from.

Wes lives in Scarborough, which is a suburb of Toronto, and has worked as a fleet manager for a local transportation concern. One of the company's drivers was renovating a house. While pulling up the floorboards, he found a bundle of prints, all of them showing Canadian trucking action, mostly from the early 1930s. These two beer trucks typify the content. Neither Wes nor the trucker can explain how the

photos came to be walled up, in a manner of speaking, inside the house.

Wes did point out to us that several of the prints were stamped with lettering for Air-Seal Limited, a longstanding British firm that markets a pre-puncture tire sealant for heavy vehicles. We're going to join him in speculating that some of these Canadian rigs may have been treated by Air-Seal and then photographed for


publicity purposes. That makes sense. It also allowed us an entrée into the brewing industry of Canada, and how the commodity reached the market.

Around the time these photographs were taken, beer was just becoming legal in Canada again. Perhaps a lot of us in the United States aren't aware of it, but national Prohibition existed in the Dominion, as well. The temperance movement of the late 19th century took hold there as here, leading first to provincial bans on alcohol, which were gradually adopted through the 1910s. There were loopholes in the law that allowed breweries to continue making beer for export. One such firm was Carling, a longtime staple among drinkers in both Canada and the United Kingdom. The rig that hauled it is an early take on a multi-trailer lash-up, predating the articulated B-trains that run on Canadian superhighways today.



Let's look at the Carling rig. It's being towed by an early 1930s Mack, most likely a model BJ tractor with shaft drive and six-cylinder gasoline power. By Mack standards of that time, it was a middleweight truck, a rung below the big, chain-driven Bulldogs that were still in production and increasingly used for over-the-road hauls. The BJ line had already been adapted as a highway tractor, pulling multiple trailers that were legal under both U.S. and Canadian law at the time. This one, however, is different. The second trailer behind the insulated beer box is a primitive stake trailer, perhaps intended for hauling kegs. There are no air lines leading to either trailer, although the little pup has been retrofitted with pneumatic road wheels. Carling was a huge seller in Canada, England and for years, in the United States. It merged with Molson and later, Coors.

The other tractor-trailer combination you see here was operated by Dominion Brewery Limited of Toronto, which was part of a consortium formed in 1930 called Canadian Breweries Limited. We love the semi-streamlined trailer. As to the tractor, we had to stick our necks out on identifying it because the printing of the photo made its nameplate illegible. But we went through the research materials here, and the grille shape, side strakes on the hood and cab profile appear to peg it as a Diamond T, possibly a Model 228S with capacity up to three tons, which debuted in 1936. Coincidentally, that was the same year that the Dominion brand was dropped. This brewing group was similarly merged into Molson Coors. The Diamond T would have used a Hercules gasoline straight-six; displacements ranged up to 404 cubic inches.

We noted that with beer exporting allowed under Canadian Prohibition, at least some of these rigs were used to haul their cargoes to ports along the Great Lakes, where enterprising entrepreneurs loaded it aboard speedy vessels for clandestine shipment to the United States. Prohibition was largely repealed by the provinces in the 1920s, nearly a decade before the Noble Experiment was finally buried in the States. Prince Edward Island was the last province in Canada to legalize alcohol, remaining dry until 1948. 



We enjoy publishing period photos of authentic, old-time working trucks, especially from the people who drove them or owned them. If you have a story and photos to share, email the author at jdonnelly@hemmings.com.



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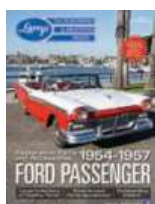


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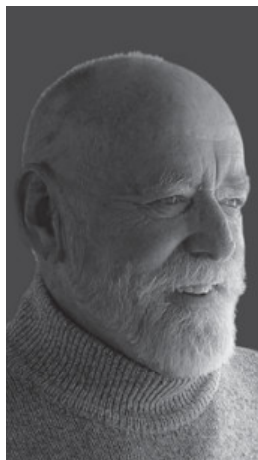
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Yesterday, I attended the 2015 Grand Nashional all-Nash car show in Fallbrook, California and met up with Rich Conaty, impresario of a radio show out of New York called *The Big Broadcast* on which he plays popular music and jazz from the 1920s and 1930s on Sunday evenings. Several years ago, he sent me a couple of CDs of his program, and I have been listening ever since. Even when I am out of the country, I can pick up his show on the Internet using my laptop.

So, why did we meet up at the Nash Nashionals? Well, it was basically because we both like old Nashes and old music. And Rich knows his Nashes and is a walking encyclopedia of the music from the Roaring Twenties and the Depression-era Thirties. His personal ride is a 1950 Nash Ambassador, maroon over cream, with the seats that fold down into beds. In fact, Rich loves old Nashes enough to fly all the way across the country to see them. So, I figured the least I could do would be to make the hour-and-a-half drive down south through Southern California traffic to greet him.

I already knew people in the Nash club such as Bob and Wendy Walker, who have a stunning 1954 Nash Le Mans that looks restored, but is all original, as well as a 1950 Ambassador two-door that is show quality. I got to know Bob and Wendy when I did feature stories on their cars. Bob makes many of the critical Nash rubber parts, like the torque tube stabilizer trunnion seal, without which classic Nashes would be undriveable, and Wendy is a surfer girl from Laguna Beach who, it turns out, knew of my wife growing up.

The earliest Nash at the show was a 1924 open touring car in original condition. It was big and black and had a large overhead-valve straight-six. It was driven in from the Los Angeles area, but there were people who either drove or trailered their cars from as far away as Wisconsin, Chicago and New York. In fact, a couple from New York drove their 1957 Nash all the way, hauling a small trailer behind them. They had no problems, but though the Nash did not overheat, they did, because their car was not equipped with air conditioning.

There was also an all-original mid-Thirties Lafayette, which was Nash's low-priced

contribution for the era. It looked a bit Chrysler Airflow-ish, though a biologist might easily mistake it for a member of the phylum *crustacea*. I would love to have a little Lafayette because there is nothing else quite like them. And I am sure they were dependable and economical, because they were a Nash product.



Meeting Rich was very likely a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Since he wrote to me a decade ago, I have listened to his radio program on WFUV wherever I happen to be in the world, and have learned a great deal about the music of my parents' and grandparents' era. In person, Rich is just as enthusiastic and witty as he is on the radio, and his love of music is just as evident. He and Ingrid, his significant other, flew out to California for the Nash show, and are now taking a driving trip up to Half Moon Bay near San Francisco, even though neither of

them are big wave surfers.

I have always loved old cars, and have attended car shows anywhere I could, even when overseas, but things have changed. I used to go solely for the cars, and then I met car people who became long-term friends. These days, I go as much for the people as for the cars. Car people are generally more interesting than the people in the street and are excited about cars in general, especially their favorite marque.

A lot of car guys are reclusive. They spend a great deal of time working on their rides and learning about them and don't usually do a lot of socializing. Of course, I am making a sweeping generalization, because the social scene is the main thing for some collectors; but those who actually do their own restoration and maintenance on their cars are—of necessity—somewhat solitary people, and are more at home in the company of a Nash or a De Soto than they are at a cocktail party.

So, the message for those people is: Get out and go to car shows. You will learn a great deal about your car, its history, its virtues and its attributes, and you will meet the nicest people, as Fats Waller says in his signature song that Rich plays as the opener for his show. The full verse of the song actually says, "You meet the nicest people, the very, very nicest people, in your dreams;" but I say, why not meet them in reality by attending a car show featuring your favorite marque? 🐾

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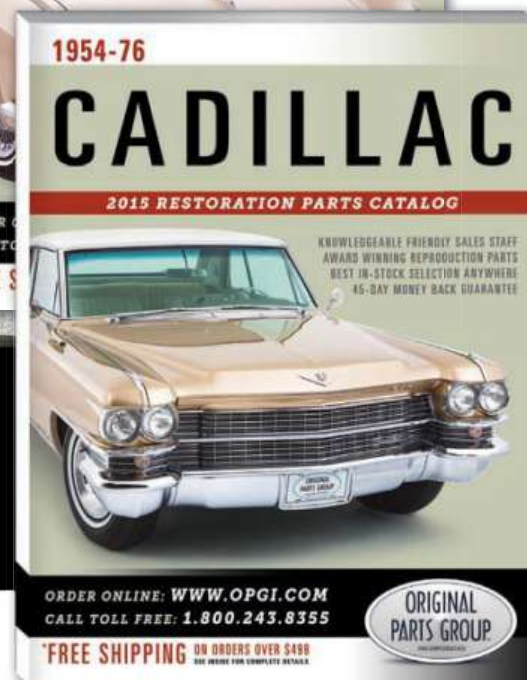
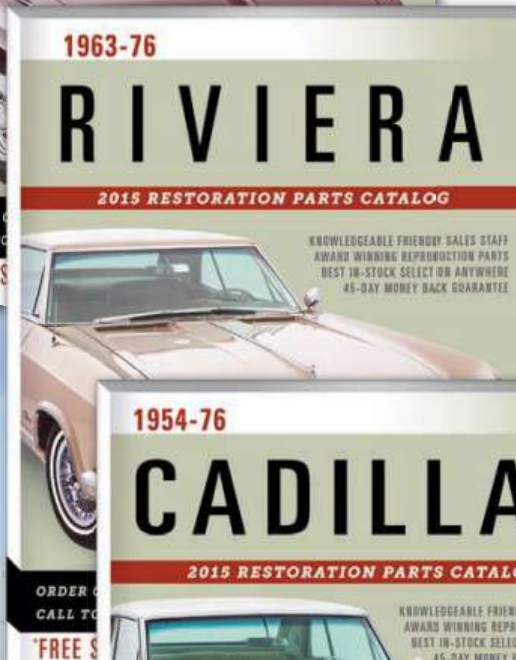
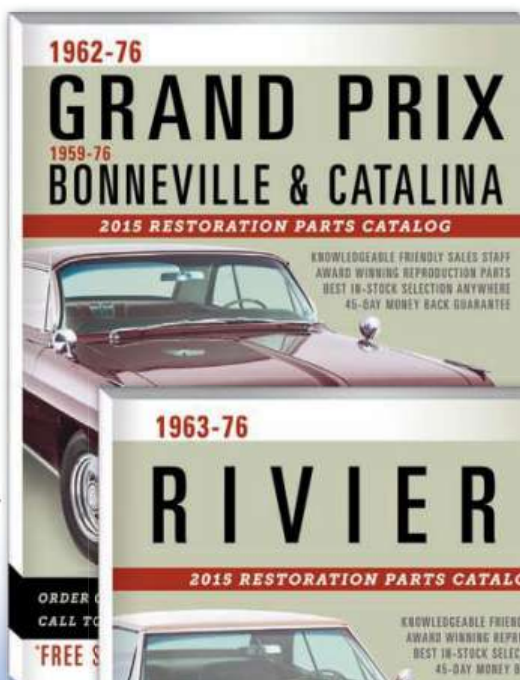
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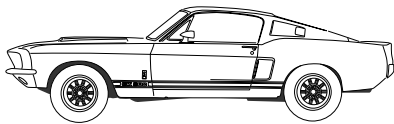


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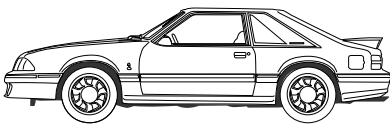
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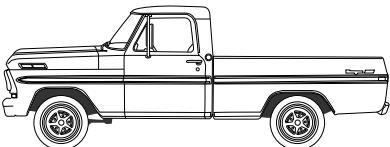
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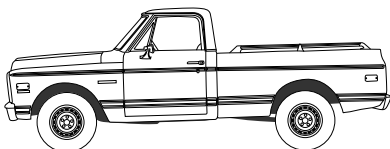
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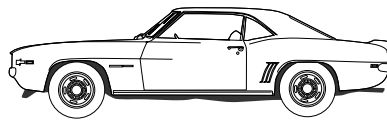
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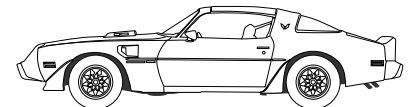
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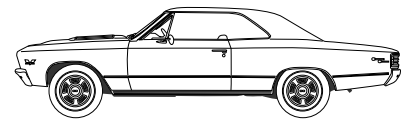
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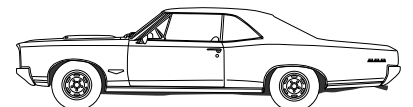
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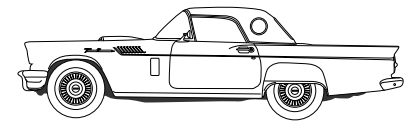
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